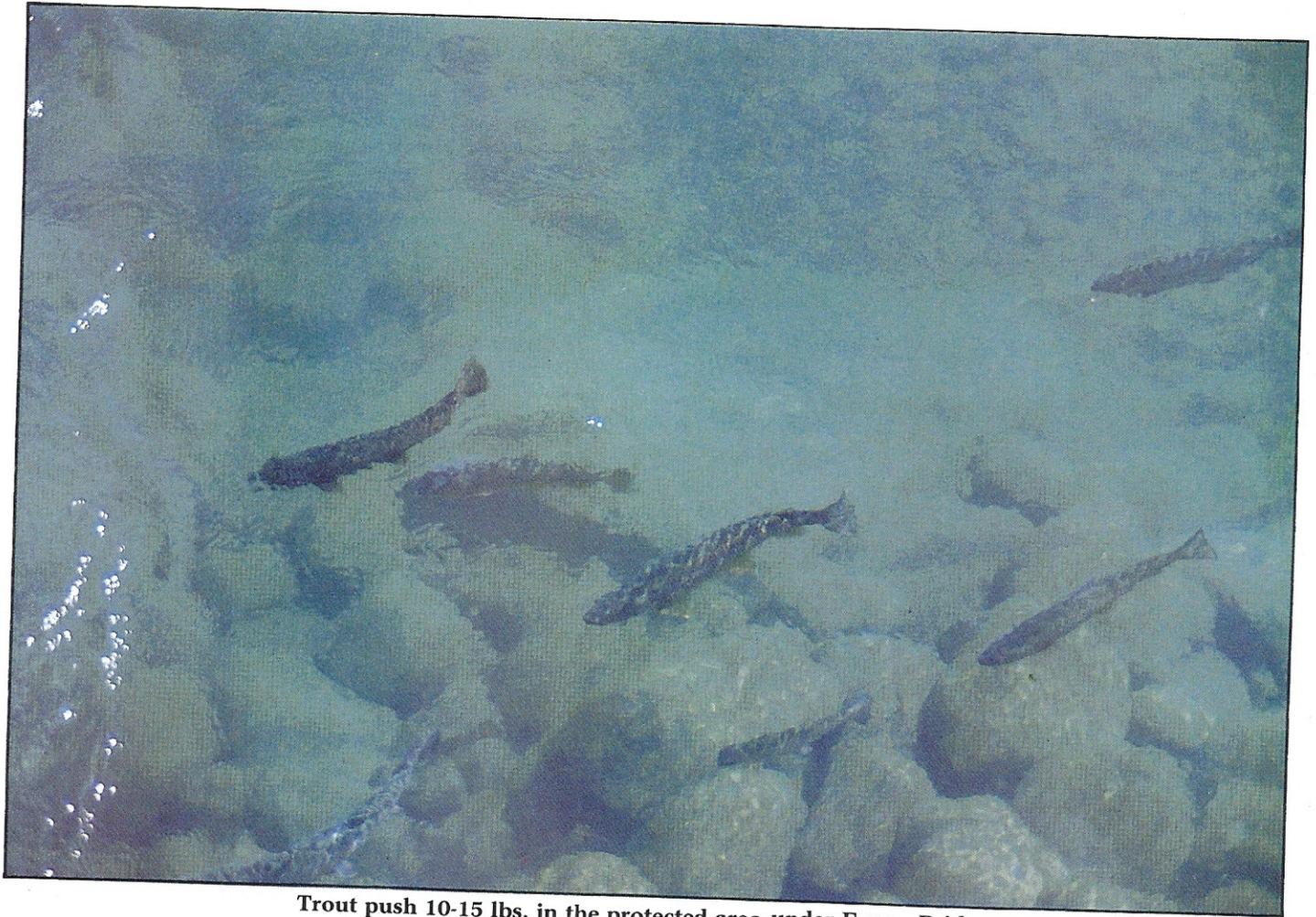


Good Trout in the Truckee Area

Despite area casinos, this locale is noted for kicking out some bright jackpots of its own



Trout push 10-15 lbs. in the protected area under Fanny Bridge.

Don Vachini

The second pass of my lure under the alder limb produced a vicious strike and I set the hook. In the low flows, the battle quickly switched to my advantage and a bronze-hued brown soon lay beached on the exposed gravel. Before concealing shadows left the riverbed, I had released a mixed bag of five nice rainbows and browns in a productive two-hour session.

This particular morning in mid-June I was relishing the solitude while probing a stretch of California's blue ribbon Truckee

River. Accompanied by sons Matt and Jason, I was visiting the Truckee area for several days, trying to do justice to as many of this North Sierras' prized trout waters as possible. Encompassing about a 60-mile swath of the Tahoe National Forest, this region harbors no less than six (and possibly seven) different salmonid species. Rainbow and brown trout are joined by cutthroat, brook and mackinaw plus kokanee salmon populations residing in a variety of snow-fed creeks, man-made impoundments, lake-fed rivers and

specially-managed waters. The remote chance of a grayling encounter is also possible.

The key fishery of this angling mecca is the Truckee River, which possesses healthy, year-long flows along with an amazing population of native trout. Originating from Lake Tahoe at Tahoe City, it courses a horseshoe-shaped loop, then snakes 30-plus miles in a northeastward direction through a fairly open, pine-studded canyon before entering Nevada's
(Continued on page 70)

GOOD TROUT IN THE TRUCKEE AREA

(Continued from p. 78)

high desert. From the border it proceeds through downtown Reno and terminates 80 miles north of here in vast Pyramid Lake.

By far the heaviest pressured stretch is the 15 miles from Tahoe City to the town of Truckee as Highway 89 follows it bend for bend, allowing easy access. Forty to sixty feet wide, brush-lined and possessing abundant food forms, this water is much to the liking of trout. Planted once, and sometimes twice weekly by the California Department of Fish and Game, this section is one of the most fishable, even in times of high water, as huge boulders and rocks form ideal holding pockets, pools and eddies. These areas constantly produce in high or low flows.

Red salmon eggs, worms and assorted spoons and spinners nail the 7- to 12 in. planters while night crawlers or dark-



A great Truckee area rainbow.

weighted flies dredged through these holes are good choices for 2- to 5-lb. browns which occur throughout the river.

Low water conditions are welcomed

because wading is the key to successful angling on this large water. Aggressive wading allows the angler to reach productive nooks and crannies.

As more and more smaller tributaries enter, the river grows in size. As one approaches Hirschdale, it becomes increasingly difficult to wade, and occasionally reaches a width of 80 to 90 feet in some stretches. However, the huge rocks again help cut the flows and ideal pocket water can always be found. Avid fly fishermen prefer the wild trout of this area.

Large meaty-looking offerings work well here. My favorite patterns include Muddler Minnow and dark green Matuka streamers (sizes 6-8), though large Sculpin patterns are also highly effective on the firm natives. Long casts are not necessary but the flies must run deep. By wading, you can line up with the current and "dab" the weighted offering into a pocket or hole, keeping the line off the main current. Thus, the fly can be worked on the bottom for lengthy periods.

The figures on Lake Tahoe are staggering. A massive body of water 22 by 12 miles, this high-altitude jewel sits at an elevation of 6,229 ft., is over 1,600 ft. deep and its azure water is the tenth clearest in the world. Equally popular for its shoreline casinos as it is for its rainbow, brown, mackinaw and kokanee, it has charter boats available for all species.

Lead-core line, downriggers and depths of 100 to 300 ft. are common practice for the big macks, which commonly run from 4 to 12 lbs., while flasher/worm combos or minnow-imitating lures trolled near feeder streams are the ticket for the landlocked salmon. Drifting live minnows with light line is a deadly method when the lake trout enter the shallow shoals to spawn.

The lake's only outlet forms the mighty Truckee. When here, a visit to Fanny Bridge is a must. Since the first one-thousand ft. downstream from the outlet

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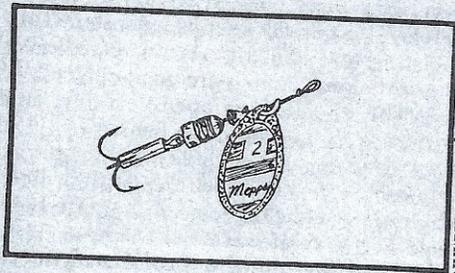
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is closed to fishing, large numbers of trophy-size rainbows and browns—many pushing 10 to 15 lbs.—congregate below the gates. As people lean over the bridge to gawk at these leviathans below, a humorous array of posteriors is visible from a short distance (thus the name Fanny Bridge).

Near the city limits of Truckee sits Donner Lake (elev. 5,937 ft.) and its namesake creek which contributes to the main river. Named for the ill-fated Donner Party, this 800-ft.-deep water is home to rainbows, browns and mackinaw over its pea-shaped, 3-by-3½-mile dimensions. Planted rainbows supply the main fare for campground visitors while dedicated boaters dredge the 100- to 200-ft. depths with lead-core line for lakers to 8 lbs. Big browns are taken in the fall or just after ice-out by trolling surface plugs.

Weekly plants of catchable rainbows help ease the heavy pressure of Donner Creek through Donner State Park. The Creek through Donner bridge produce well on red salmon eggs, cheese, worms and small lures. In the fall, some hefty (albeit wary) browns ascend from the main river to spawn and are fooled on minnow-imitating streamers or silver spoons.

Situated four miles east of Truckee via Highway 267 is Martis Lake (elev. 5,957 ft.), a desolate looking body of water which is part of a special Cal Trout management project. Serving as only one of three refuges for the rare Lahontan cutthroat trout, it was the Golden State's pilot catch and release lake. Single, barbless hooks and zero-limit regulations protect the self-sustaining population of predominantly 16- to 24-in. trophies, which are notoriously gullible.



JOYCE SHERMAN

This water provided my son Jason the thrill of a lifetime when he was only 10. A cutt well over 4 lbs. inhaled his black Woolly Worm on a crisp May morning in 1982. Barely able to wrestle it into the net, he still grins from ear to ear when reminded of it.

The shallow 70-acre flood control impoundment has precitable hatches to include damselflies, caddisflies and mayflies. Size 14-16 Adams, Quill Gordon and Cahill patterns in light to olive shades provide good imitations. I prefer Woolly Worm, Nymph and Brown Leech patterns (sizes 10-12) fished wet in the inlet channel.

For the spin fisherman, light-colored

lures (sizes 0-2) with dark spots are highly effective.

Fed by lake releases, the creek below offers a brushy challenge but will produce nice native browns with proper effort.

Three man-made water storing reservoirs north of town detain flows of several aesthetic tributaries before they enter the Truckee. Minor dirt roads provide access to the upper sections of Alder, Prosser and Sagehen—all ideal small creeks. Running a near constant 55 degrees, possessing good pocket water and abundant brush cover, they offer a stiff challenge for the creek freak. Poking bait through the brush is the most feasible method of taking feisty 6- to 8-in. rainbow, brown or an

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occasional colorful brook trout on these headwater streams.

Originating from Lake Webber along the Henness Pass Road, the Little Truckee River manages a decent head of steam as it flows through both Stampede and Boca reservoirs before entering the Truckee near Hirschdale. Traversing an open flood plain course above Stampede, the water's main fare are rainbows and browns. Each season several 4- to 5-pounders are taken, usually in isolated stretches away from Highway 89.

Between Stampede and Boca it again meanders over an open, willow-choked valley offering a fantastic spawning facility for Boca specimens. Besides housing

resident rainbows and browns and supporting kokanee spawning runs, there is an outside chance of grayling still being present. During the early 1970s, the DFG experimented with arctic grayling in this section for two years. Plants stopped due to costly hatchery expenses. Never achieving more than 6 to 7 inches, they nevertheless offered fine sport for a few seasons according to locals.

The three water storing impoundments—Prosser, Boca and Stampede—are noted for fine angling throughout the year. Stampede (elev. 5,900 ft.), fed by the Little Truckee and Sagehen Creek, is a fairly shallow, flooded mountain meadow, rich in aquatic nutrients. In-

creasingly popular with float tubers, many nice rainbows and browns are taken along its shoreline weedbeds. Trolling near the dam and feeder arms is also productive. Some large, fall run browns enter the Little Truckee from these bays.

Fed entirely by Little Truckee flows, Boca sits near the 5,700-ft. elevation. While the bulk of its fishing consists of planted rainbows, the addition of 52,500 kokanee fingerlings in 1982 created more excitement. Five years later, the super-aggressive salmon average 14 in. and seem to prefer flashy lures near the surface. June and July have proven the best times for them to bite.

Bank fishing is best along the deep channel where the Little Truckee enters. Baits, lures and flies all work well in this area.

Prosser Reservoir (elev. 5,700 ft.), formed by Alder and Prosser creeks, achieves a depth of 140 ft. and covers 754 acres when full. Heavily planted with catchables, it is very popular with bank fishermen as fish tend to congregate and move along the shoreline. One early spring day, my sons Matt and Jason intercepted a school of cruising 'bows. Cast after cast with their Mepps spinners produced consistent strikes for at least 15 minutes until the fish migrated elsewhere.

While all these reservoirs can be adequately fished from shore, a boat is a distinct advantage. Early in the season (May, June, July), trolling the shoreline is best while late season (August, September, October), anglers should work the old creek channels. The tributary entrances are solid bets all season.

Since the lakes don't roil easily, light leaders are suggested. Silvery, minnow-imitating lures worked at varying depths always produce. Mepps, Rooster Tail, Kastmaster, Panther Martin, Needlefish and Abalone Demon are good choices.

All three lakes are open year-long and offer excellent winter ice fishing.

Area waters are suitable for both spin or fly tackle. Matched with 4- to 6-lb. line, light or ultra-light rods and reels are both sporting and effective.

Depending on the previous winter's snowpack, the best time to visit is between May through October. During this time, there is something for everyone. For up-to-the-minute information, contact the Mountain Tackle and Hardware store in Truckee, telephone (916) 587-4844.

State and forest service campgrounds, along with an array of motels and cabins, provide both numerous and diverse lodging facilities.

Though thousands travel through Truckee daily, most are intent on beating the odds in the Biggest Little City in the World, 33 miles further eastward. To me, however, the Truckee area is the real jackpot, offering a more consistent chance at some bright payoffs! □

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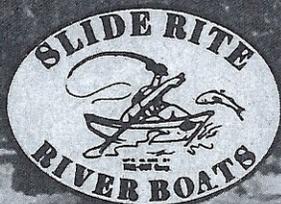
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