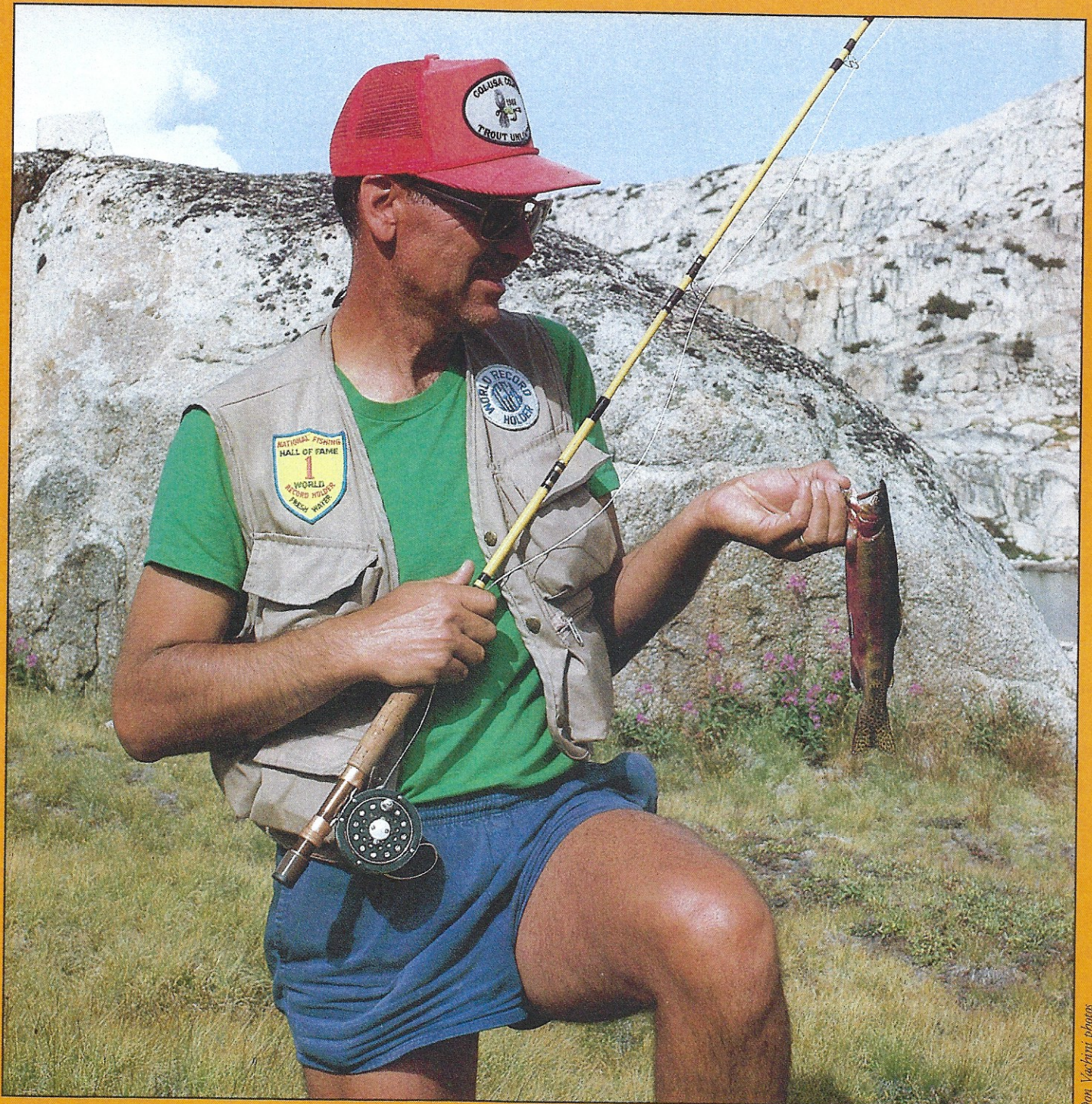


# Golden Trout Tactics



Don Vachini photos

Golden trout, California's state fish, can be found in Kings Canyon National Park, between Fresno and Bishop. Author has numerous specie records.



moving water not only allows for heavier line but covers up sloppy casts as well.

This case was well illustrated on Big Bear Lake's inlet, which has produced three of my current world marks. The incoming waterfall has gouged out a four-foot deep pool which then proceeds about 25 feet through a rocky saddle before settling into the lake. The layout is ideal for fish as the sheer rock walls make it difficult to both approach and cast while the sanctuary of deeper water is just a fin-flip away.

Trying to punch too much power into my cast while in a sitting position, I bounced the tan caddis nymph off a boulder and fly line clumsily splashed like coiled hemp in the current. Frantically stripping line in an attempt to rectify the mistake, the strike took me by complete surprise. Despite both aberrant

strike can either be manifested as a dull tug or slashing jolt, anglers should set the hook at any type of line hesitation. The rod tip should be pointed toward the fly and just in or right at water level to aid in a more efficient hook set.

Spin fishermen using small spoons, spinners or plugs seem to enjoy much success at certain times. Even though no baitfish inhabit these lofty waters, gold-plated Mepps, Wob-L-Rite, Kastmaster, yellow/orange Panther Martins, yellow Rooster Tails and small gold/brown Rapalas probably resemble bite-sized juveniles to the larger goldens.

It is not uncommon to work over concentrations of large fish and have them spurn all offerings time after time, then inexplicably go on brief frenzies, smashing imitations with authority. Letting the lure sink deep and

retrieving in an erratic, herky-jerky motion often entices a smashing strike, probably more out of territorial irritation than hunger. While working the deep side of Royce 2 four years ago, I imparted an energetic zig-zag course to my spoon and watched a husky, near two pounder vigorously annihilate the lure which it had snubbed for well over ten minutes!

While patience coupled with perseverance can often produce a payoff combination, I have found that working flies or lures parallel to deep shelves or shorelines can provide a pleasant change of pace from regular perpendicular retrieves. Trailing a fly 3-4 feet behind a spinner will also pique the interest of wary denizens.

As much care must be taken in landing these big fish as in hooking them. A long handled net proves very handy in landing girthy fish over the obstacle of large shoreline boulders.

Adventuresome anglers intent on matching wits with this exotic species must not only endure the rigorous challenges posed by jumbled talus, inhospitable ridges and icy snowfields but should be armed with a tactical arsenal as well. Visitors to these quintessential trophy lakes over two miles high will find the goldens just as difficult to catch as they are to reach!

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*Of our combined dozen world standards, 11 have been the direct result of arduous crawls and awkward casts performed from several contorted positions. Since so much time is spent kneeling or crawling, I have found knee pads to be a great deterrent to the harsh granite.*

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presentation and improper retrieve, a 1 pound, 2 ounce bruiser ended up on my line. No doubt the swirling water served to hide my faux pas!

One of the main keys to catching these bulky trout is understanding their food forms. While mosquitos, mayflies, damselflies and midges are present, caddis flies and freshwater shrimp seem to make up a good portion of their menu. Though tan is my personal favorite, I have also identified brown, green and olive shades of caddis in these three drainages. Both larval and adult stages of this prolific insect are highly relished by the big lake residents. While pan-sizers will hit dry flies fairly consistently, the vast majority of our weighty goldens have been taken on subsurface imitations. Size 10-14 Caddis Pupa, Hare's Ear Nymph and Bucktail Coachman patterns have all proven their worth for us.

In some of these sky-high lakes, goldens subsist almost entirely on scuds. Noted for their high caloric value, these minute freshwater crustaceans are understandably a favorite of the broad-chested fish. Weighted brown Leech, Scud and various dark-bodied nymph patterns suffice.

Presenting imitations of these tiny shrimp is a tedious operation usually requiring a high density sinking line to quickly bring them down to depths of around 30 feet. From here they are besty twitched upward ever so slowly using a sink and draw technique. Since the

## WORLD RECORD PROCEDURES FOR GOLDEN TROUT

To have a realistic chance of establishing a golden trout standard with either the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) or the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame (HOF), two non-profit organizations which sanction world angling records, one must use foresight and planning. The first step is obtaining and reviewing the rules and regulations for world record procedures before fishing (both have virtually the same guidelines).

While the All-Tackle world record golden has stood for over four decades, it is the line and tippet classes which probably offer the most realistic chance at record status. A brief glimpse at the golden trout section reveals most marks between 1-4 pounds.

Once a particular class has been targeted, anglers should carry a selection of lines or tippets corresponding to that category.

Aside from hooking and landing a qualifier, the biggest obstacle is getting the fish weighed on a certified scale. For backcountry anglers operating 1-2 days away from civilization, both organizations allow the use of a hand held spring scale provided it is certified for accuracy both before and after the trip (the local Department of Weights & Measures will perform this task).

Both organizations demand quality color photographs in a variety of poses. For identification, a closeup of the whole fish showing tips of fins and other notable features; another depicting the whole fish plus the scale with weight clearly showing; and finally a third showing angler, side view of the whole fish and the tackle used to subdue it.

The application itself must be filled out clearly with all signatures plus any additional notes to explain out of the ordinary situations (when backpacking, I always have to explain the use of my scale, show its certification papers and describe my specific location in the backcountry).

Required line samples must be included with the application and photos. The completed packet must be notarized and mailed within 60 days of the catch date (the HOF allows 90 days).

For more information contact either: IGFA, 3000 East Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316; or HOF, Box 33, Hall of Fame Drive, Hayward, WI 54843.