

The power and speed of these fish must be experienced to be believed. The strength of a 120-pound tarpon is not twice as much as a 60-pound tarpon; it's more like 10 times harder. They will test your equipment to the maximum, your abilities, and more importantly, your resolve. I am still amazed at the amount of physical punishment inflicted on me by these giants at the other end of the line.

I used a 12- to 14-weight outfit with a minimum of 350 yards of 30-pound backing. I prefer running line with a variety of shooting heads in the 500 to 1100 grain weights. Deceiver style or Whistler style flies in black/red, purple/red, and white/red work great.

The average daytime temperature is in the mid 80s and in the evening, it drops to the low 70s. There are two rainy seasons, one from the middle of June through the end of August, and the other from the mid-November through early January. As with most spots in the tropics, rain is possible any time, so be prepared. Hurricanes are seldom a problem this far south in Central America. As a result, September and October are a great time to visit, when some of the other Caribbean lodges are closed.

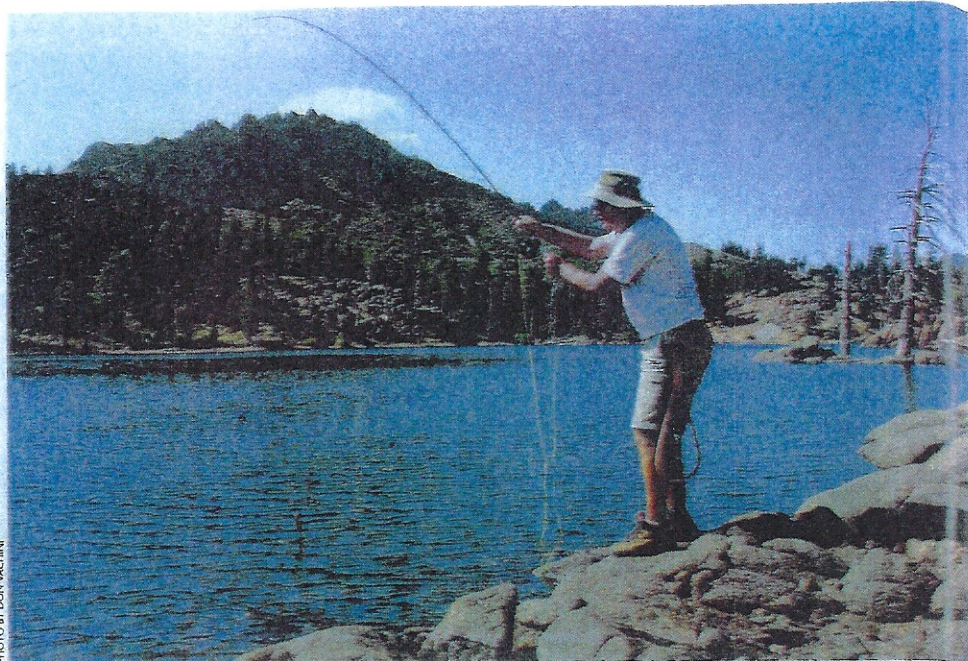


PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

ably describe them as being "...generally two-four feet in length, weighing between 20-30 pounds," and he refers to them as "salmon-trout."

Nothing against the bronze-hued, 14-inch specimen I had just released back into Lower Kinney Lake, but it was a mere minnow compared to its ancestors described by Fremont. At the moment, I fantasized about plying this harsh landscape some 170 years earlier, silently pondering the bend one of those 20-pound natives would put in my fly rod. The raucous call of a Clark's nutcracker abruptly ended my daydream. Tragically, trappings of "progress" by immigrants into the American West had brought *Oncorhynchus clarki henshawi* to the brink of extinction by 1915. Today, the Lahontan cutthroat occupies only 5 percent of its ancestral range in California.

In 1995, the federal Lahontan Cutthroat Recovery Plan was designed to reintroduce this subspecies into some of its historic range, basically targeting less-visited, higher-elevation basins from Lake Tahoe south to Mammoth.

Indeed, a duo of my favorite still waters perched along the Sierra Nevada's granitic eastern escarpment have benefited greatly from its implementation. Sitting one above the other, the naturally occurring Kinney lakes lie within the Toiyabe National Forest north of Ebbetts Pass. To reach them from U.S. Highway 395 just north of Coleville, turn west onto California Highway 89, follow it over Monitor Pass, then turn left on California Highway 4. Travel 10 miles to Kinney Reservoir (8,353 feet), park, and cross its dam. A moderately difficult 1-mile trail leads to the lakes.

Forming the headwaters of Silver Creek, a major East Fork Carson River tributary (and historic "salmon-trout" spawning venue), Upper Kinney (8,750 feet) and Lower Kinney (8,500 feet) have received between 3,000 and 5,000 "sub-catchable" cutthroat each year for the past decade and a half. Healthy populations exist in both of these forested, 15-acre lakes. Even though the majority of the fish range from 10 to 12 inches and some individuals reach 14 inches, the fast-growing holdovers occasionally provide unexpected bonuses in the form of substantially larger specimens.

Kinney's thriving residents tend to be deep dwellers and relentless cruisers that follow their prey for lengthy distances. Strategy at these oft-windy

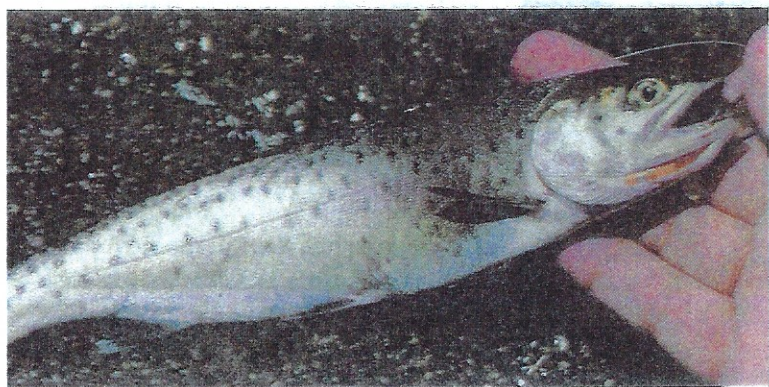


PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

## Kinney Lakes, CA

By Don Vachini

Historically, Lahontan cutthroat flourished as the only trout inhabitant of the Truckee, Carson, and Walker river drainages. These fish were vividly documented by explorer John C. Fremont during his 1844 expedition through the region; his journal accounts incred-

lakes involves fishing isolated steep drop-offs along finger coves and deep channels, probing such areas with fast-sinking, size-8 and -10 bead-head Woolly Buggers and Articulated Leech patterns in black, purple, chartreuse, and olive shades. After a long cast, allow the offering to settle briefly on bottom, then initiate "burst and relax" retrieves, maintaining slight tension to create a tantalizing, darting/falling action with the fly. Anticipate subtle, deliberate takes, sometimes on the drop, other times right near shore. Those with float tubes who employ a strip-pause sequence away from shore enjoy a definite advantage.

Early and late in the day are the best times, but I have fared exceptionally well just prior to and after thunderstorms. If you see rising trout, a gently-presented, size-10 through -14 Parachute Adams or Rubberlegs, with a small Copper John or Sparkle Pupa as a dropper, will do the trick.

Coleville's Meadowcliff Resort, (530) 495-2255, [www.meadowcliff.com](http://www.meadowcliff.com), offers angler-friendly amenities, and owner Tim Fesco readily provides timely angling advice.

Although worthy backcountry prizes, Kinney's scrappy battlers certainly will not erase visions of the legendary salmon-trout. They do, however, allow visiting anglers to pay homage to this cutthroat's incredible legacy.

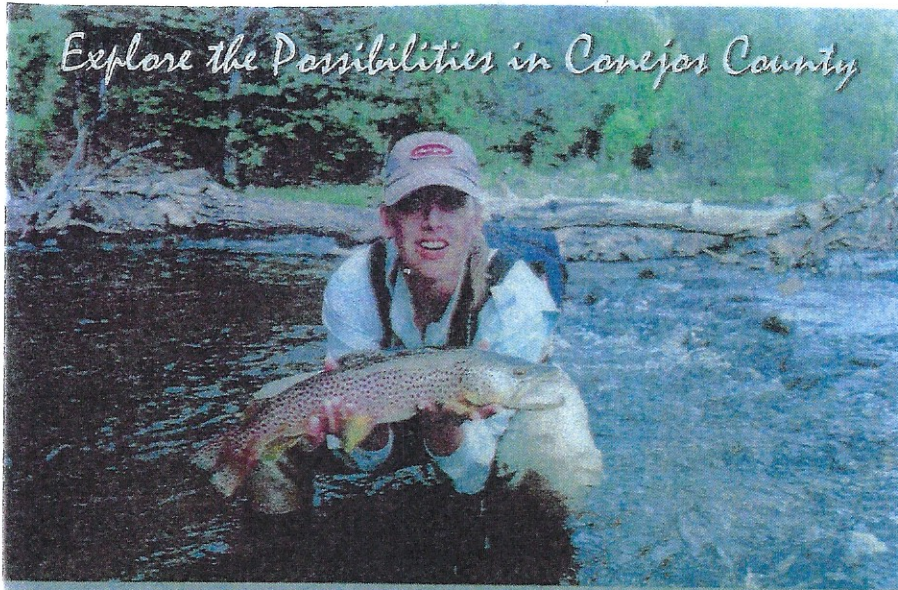
## South Platte River, CO

By Rick Murphy

Just over an hour's drive west of Colorado Springs is South Park, at an elevation of about 8,600 feet, one of four major alpine valleys in Colorado. The crown jewel here is a meandering stream that leaves Spinney Reservoir on its way to Eleven Mile Reservoir. This 3.5-mile section of the South Platte River is referred to as "The Dream Stream."

This stretch boasts a springtime spawning run of rainbow, cutthroat, and cut-bow (a naturally occurring hybrid) trout; the fish reach double-digit weights. In the fall, the stream

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