

Silver Creek Reservoir, NV By Don Vachini

Motoring eastward across the Great Basin on US Highway 50, Terry Donahoe and I had encountered hundreds of miles of desolate sagebrush and windswept sand dunes—a landscape seemingly unfit for habitation by man or beast, let alone trout. Yet as we neared Utah, a chain of lofty, white-capped mountains appeared on the horizon, their verdant timbered slopes contrasting sharply against the desert drabness.

Tucked along the east-central border of the Silver State in eastern White Pine County, the north/south trending Snake Range, with peaks hovering between 12,000 and 13,000 feet, collects a surprising amount of winter snowfall. Resultant seeps, springs, and one last remaining glacier distribute yearlong life to several perennial streams, each tumbling steeply down the mountains' wrinkled faces, only to disappear into the desert sand below. Home to introduced brook, rainbow, and brown trout in their lower sections, these streams support precious populations of indigenous Bonneville cutthroat in their headwaters.

From our base campsite in Great Basin National Park (GBNP), we successfully managed an audience with a half-dozen or so *Oncorhynchus clarki utah*, thanks to Chris Crookshanks, a fisheries biologist with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). He accurately pinpointed a selection of minuscule rivulets within GBNP and the neighboring Mount Moriah Wilderness, where this beleaguered subspecies has made a comeback. However, during our

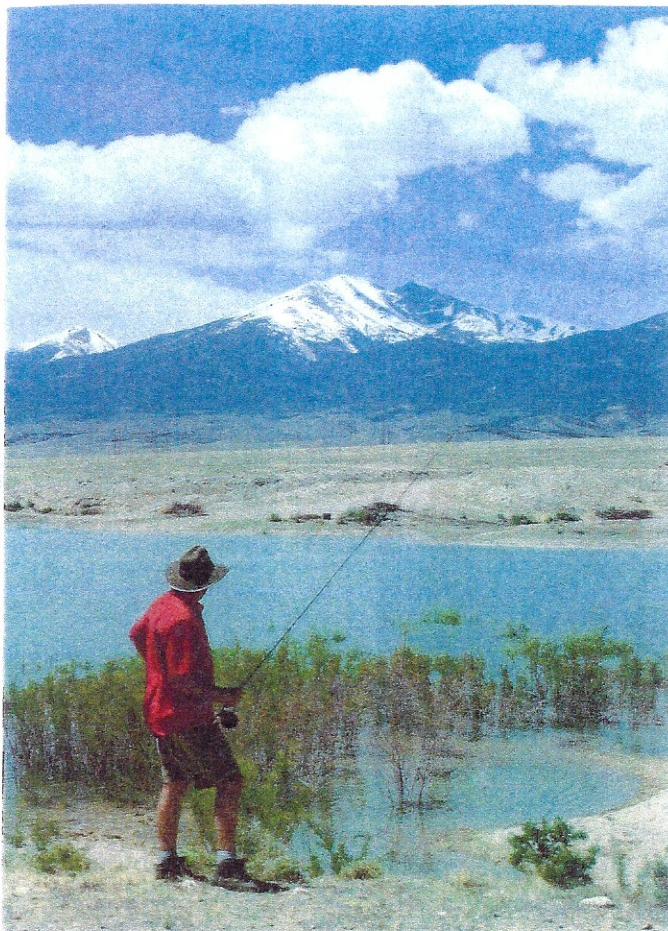
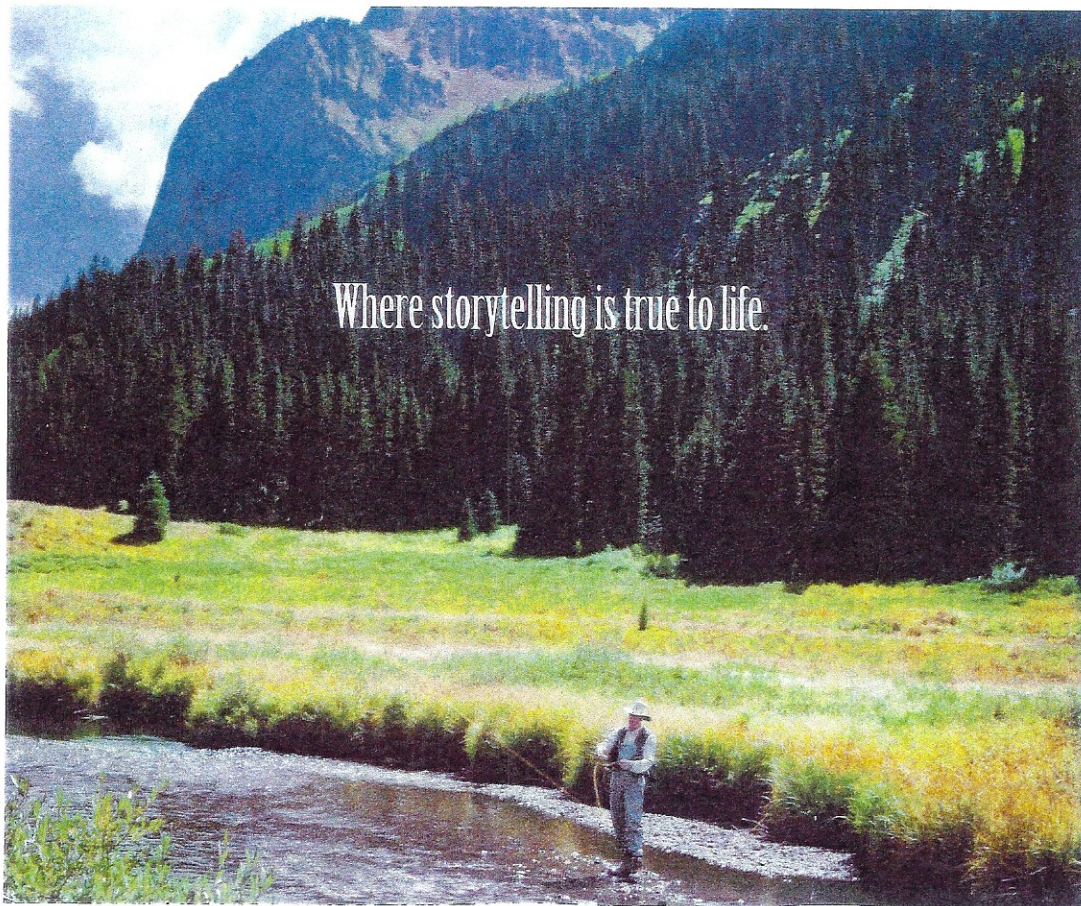


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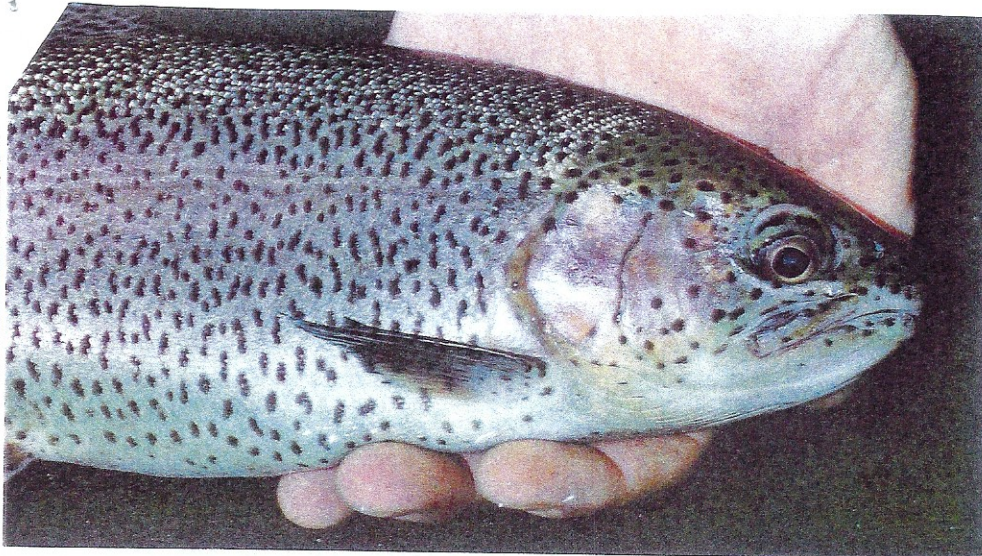


PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

downtime from meticulously stalking these small-water denizens, we explored nearby Silver Creek Reservoir, another Crookshanks suggestion and a fishery requiring far less physical effort than those tiny mountain streams.

Emanating from nearby 12,067-foot Mount Moriah, Silver Creek careens southeasterly down a deeply-incised canyon replete with aspen and conifers. After crossing the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest boundary, it courses through arid, mostly private land as a thin emerald ribbon prior to being impounded for irrigation purposes. Dammed in 1955, the creek forms a 15-acre reservoir and, although it is privately owned, angler access is allowed under a gracious agreement with Baker Ranches. Stocking 4,500 9- to 10-inch rainbows in spring and another 1,500 in fall, the NDOW maintains a year-round, put-and-take fishery.

To find this little impoundment from Highway 50, just west of the south turn leading to Baker, head north on County Road 41 and drive 2 miles; turn left (west) onto Silver Creek Road to reach the reservoir. The nondescript, 30-foot-deep reservoir offers a stunning, unobstructed view of towering 13,063-foot Wheeler Peak.

Shallow, sandy shorelines around the main body of the lake require lengthy casts and perpendicular retrieves during midday hours. Fish will cruise closer to shore during low-light periods. Most trout range from 10 to 12 inches, but fat holdovers can top 15 inches. The incoming creek channel is probably the more consistent location because the trout are attracted to the oxygenated water.

While repeatedly stripping a meaty, size 8 or 10 olive Matuka or Woolly Bugger (yellow, purple, or white) along the cutbanks of the channel or near submerged and surface brush can provoke trout, dapping or bottom-bouncing a weighted, size 12 or 14 beadhead Copper John, Prince Nymph, or Bird's Nest through the moving flows is also productive.

If you fish the creek above the impoundment, be respectful of private property. Wet wading and meticulously short lining size 14 or 16, dark-hued nymphs under a heavy aspen, willow, and cottonwood canopy is most reliable for wild 'bows, brookies, and the occasional brown.

Only about 12 miles to the west on Highway 50, and within sight of the Sacramento Pass Rest Stop (7,154 feet), Sac Pass Pond is encircled by a thick curtain of reeds. This spring-fed, 2-acre pond is stocked with pan-size rainbows and offers a pleasant respite for travelers seeking a break from driving the so-called loneliest highway in America.

Baker, the nearest town, offers lodging, restaurants, groceries, gasoline, and fishing licenses. For additional area information, contact GBNP, (775) 234-7331, www.nps.gov/grba.

Sand Cove Reservoirs, UT

By Hartt Wixom

Southern Utah's Upper Sand Cove Reservoir offers anglers a chance at big rainbow trout and even bigger largemouth bass, making it an enticing mixed-bag fishery. I've taken both species, measuring in pounds, on streamers cast from the same location along the bank. Its companion, the shallower Lower Sand Cove Reservoir, produces larger bass but is small and sometimes winter-kills.

In good years, you can fish both these waters and also try the temperamental but sometimes productive Ivins Reservoir 8 miles to the south on the same trip. The Sand Cove lakes are located off State Route 18 north of Saint George (turn south of Veyo), as marked by a U.S. Bureau of Land Management sign on the west side of the roadway. From this spot, it's 2 miles to Upper Sand Cove and 4 miles to Lower Sand Cove. You can also get there from west of Saint George on Highway 91, heading to the south edge of the community of Gunlock (no services). Before crossing the bridge into Gunlock, take the dirt road to the east and proceed up a winding hill for some 5 miles to Lower Sand Cove. Shaded camping space is abundant by the lower reservoir but is limited to a windswept flat along the upper one.

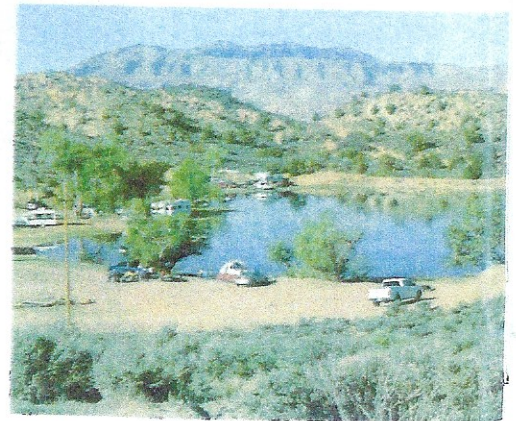


PHOTO BY HARTT WIXOM

Black Woolly Buggers have fetched largemouth bass more than 3 pounds for me on all three waters. One day, I hooked what seemed to be the bottom of Upper Sand Cove, but the line began moving and, eventually, I landed a 3-pound, 8-ounce bass. I've also