

access was actually in the SNRA. Because of motorized/mechanized vehicle restrictions, the road was shortened appropriately and the trailhead was relocated to accommodate high-clearance vehicles. The lower trailhead was not compromised and remains as before. The tradeoff between the two trailheads is a 2-mile walk. I have it on good authority that the extra 2-mile stroll is less time consuming than the drive to the upper trailhead. For details on the SNRA, Wilderness Area regulations, and seasonal access, visit the Sawtooth National Forest web page (www.fs.usda.gov/sawtooth).

Crystal Lake, CA

By Don Vachini

Nestled between Lassen Peak and Mount Shasta, the Burney Basin in Shasta County is home to a who's who of famous and productive trout waters, such as Hat and Burney Creeks, the Pit River, and Baum Lake, all within a 15-mile radius of the town of Burney.

Sitting adjacent to Baum Lake, the Crystal Lake State Fish Hatchery augments the area's waters with bountiful plants of rainbow, brook, and brown trout. However, it is the lesser-known, 60-acre Crystal Lake that not only provides water for the facility but offers a wild card of potential catches—along with a hefty challenge.

Fed via subterranean aquifers directly from the bowels of nearby Lassen Peak, Crystal historically flowed into Hat Creek. During the late 1940s, Pacific Gas & Electric created a hydroelectric power plant by damming Hat to form Baum Lake, while at the same time the California Department of Fish and Game erected a hatchery. While Baum remains the beneficiary of infused trout from the on-site hatchery, Crystal has not been stocked in nearly 60 years.

Moderate densities of naturally occurring rainbow trout exist here, with



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an occasional brown entering the mix. Additionally, a scattering of Baum's Eagle Lake-strain planters instinctively negotiate the outlet falls and supplement the native population. According to Steve Vaughn, a local angling guru, rainbows here typically run from 7 to 12 inches. He says, "Expect some ranging up to 15 inches, while piscivorous browns can approach 5 pounds."

Crystal's residents are well fed. However, these fish are both hard to reach and extremely wary. With much of the shoreline marshy and bordered by tules, the shallow, gin-clear waters keep the trout on full alert for the sharp-eyed bald eagles and osprey.

Gas-powered motors are off-limits, but a float tube is handy. Vaughn suggests that tubers wear polarized glasses and target the midlake springs—indicated by a white, sandy bottom—located near the deeper portion of the lake. In order to gauge the depth of trout suspended in the water column, Vaughn hangs two or three nymph droppers under an indicator and repeatedly yo-yos the rig in or near the bubbling water in an attempt to entice a strike.

The shallow outlet channel probably produces the most reliable action because many smaller trout seek cover while awaiting food forms in the gentle current. Daintily placing a Stimulator or Humpy up close to the weedy bank or grass-covered island normally grabs the attention of an inquisitive trout.

The lake is closed from November 16 until the last Saturday in April. From Redding, you can reach Crystal Lake by traveling 55 miles east on State Route 299. A few miles past the State Route 89/299 intersection, turn right onto Cassel Road, proceed for 2 miles, and turn left onto Baum Lake Road. Walking access to the lake is less than 100 yards from the paved parking area.



PHOTO BY DON WACHIN

Salmon Bay River, Alaska

By E. Donnell Thomas, Jr.

The first time I fished the stream that connects Salmon Bay Lake to the salt water on the northern end of southeastern Alaska's Prince of Wales Island, my friends and I accessed the stream by skiff from our mother ship during a wilderness bow hunt for spring bears, and the approach required careful attention to the area's strong tides. After a vigorous but pleasant hike around the edge of the large tidal flat at the head of the bay, we reached some gorgeous water, broke out our pack rods, and began to enjoy the kind of day that burns its way deep into an angler's memory: one bright, aggressive steelhead after another, all taken in a rain-forest wilderness setting that would have been stunning, even without the fish.

The Salmon Bay Lake system holds cutthroats and Dollies, and receives runs of all Pacific salmon species save the king, but there are easier waters to fish for these species nearby. Wild steelhead are the featured attraction, with the strongest runs arriving in April and early May. While most fish weigh from 6 to 10 pounds, 15-pound specimens appear from time to time. Besides, it's the setting—clear, attractive water surrounded by pristine rain-forest habitat—rather than the size of the fish that makes the place special.

As is usually the case in Alaska, the access is more complicated than the fishing. I have reached the stream on foot from the island's road system, but because this requires a lot of bushwhacking, and the flat can't be crossed at high tide, it's not for the faint of heart. The approach by sea is also a bit too tricky to recommend to the casual visitor. By far the best way to



PHOTO BY DON AND LORI THOMAS

reach the water is by taking a float-plane to Salmon Bay Lake from Ketchikan (Promech Air, www.promechair.com; Pacific Airways, www.flypacificairways.com).

While that's a lot of effort and expense for a day trip, the good news is that the U.S. Forest Service maintains a cabin on Salmon Bay Lake that is available for public use