



THIS SPRING, Golden State anglers find healthy populations of game fish all across California. From a variety of trout to bass to salmon, an angler's target list can spread across more than 4,800 lakes and 30,000 miles of rivers and streams. Each of the following statewide locations offers exceptional on-site facilities, great fishing for budding youngsters to seasoned veterans, and a variety of local family activities to keep everyone ready to go!

CALIFORNIA'S BEST FAMILY FISHING

By Don Vachini

▶ LAKE SISKIYOU

With dozens of snow-fed lakes accessible via short hikes of an hour or less — and miles of clear, cascading streams — the thick-forested Trinity Divide area of Shasta-Trinity National Forest makes for a solid camping/fishing destination.

Drive to Castle and Gumboot lakes and hike to Little Castle, Cliff, Deadfall, Heart, Porcupine, Toad and Mumbo lakes and their 6- to 9-inch wild brook and rainbow trout residents. All these waters feed the South, Middle and North forks of the Sacramento River. These always-hungry trout prefer bead-headed nymph fly patterns. Dredge your presentation through scaled-down pockets, perfect sites for introducing juveniles to creek-style fly-fishing.

The forks converge before entering Lake Siskiyou, a 430-acre impoundment formed by Box Canyon Dam. Sitting in full view of 14,000-foot Mt. Shasta, it maintains icy water temperatures, abundant nutrients and underwater structure. Its fishery includes put-and-grow rainbow and brook trout, as well as a standing population of smallmouth bass.

Lake Siskiyou Camp Resort (phone: 530-926-2618; online at: ReynoldsResorts.com/LakeSiskiyou.html) features cabins, tent sites, RV hookups, boat rentals, tackle and an improved swimming beach, making for a pleasant summer setup.

Pair silver-and-blue Kastmaster spoons or Rapala plugs with lead-core line or downriggers. Maneuver the rig through the submerged creek channel or along the steep, rocky shoreline during daylight hours to entice either trout or smallmouths. Otherwise, drop anchor and suspend paddle-tail jigs or inflated night crawlers in the lake inlet's slow-moving water.

From Interstate 5 in Mt. Shasta City, take the turnoff to

Siskiyou. Turn left onto WA Barr Road and follow it 3 miles to the lake on North Fork Road. Gumboot Lake and several hiking destinations also are located farther down WA Barr Road.

Along the Way: The Railroad Park in Dunsmuir and Mt. Shasta Fish Hatchery remain points of interest. Day hikes on Mt. Eddy and Panther Meadows on Mt. Shasta are physically active options.

Forest Service campground information is available at Shasta-Trinity National Forest/Mount Shasta Ranger District at (530) 926-4511; online at FS.fed.us.

The Fly Shop (phone: 800-669-3474; online at TheFlyShop.com) in Redding is a valuable source of information on the entire Sacramento River and, in fact, NorCal region.

▶ BURNEY BASIN

With subterranean, year-round flows from nearby Mt. Lassen accounting for prodigious aquatic growth and insect hatches, the Burney Basin is an ideal family fishing/vacation spot. Crystal Lake Fish Hatchery infuses copious numbers of rainbow, brook and brown trout in area waters, and McArthur-Burney Falls State Park provides visitors with abundant campsites, cabins, hot showers and world-famous waterfalls.

Without doubt, spring-fed Burney and Hat creeks dominate this semi-arid stretch of eastern Shasta County, where anglers of all types and ages find fishing success. Burney Creek benefits greatly from concentrated trout stockings in the half-mile section just above the falls, through the town of Burney and in its upper reach on Mt. Burney. Likewise, Hat Creek is heavily stocked, with top fishing found along several Highway

89 campgrounds and Cassell Forebay above Lake Britton. Creek-fishermen retrieve in-line Vibrax or Rooster Tail spinners through deep holes, bounce red salmon eggs into seams and eddies, or high stick Caddis-imitating nymphs for gullible planters.

The moving water below Hat 1 Powerhouse is a popular Baum Lake gathering spot for sizeable browns and rainbows. Anglers often use the foot-bridge over the channel to gain both views and advantageous presentations.

Lake Britton affords a warm-water fishery for largemouth and smallmouth bass and panfish. Rebel, Shad Rap and crawdad-patterned plugs trolled deep along the Pit River arm's rocky drop-off structure can entice feisty smallmouth. Brushy shoreline structure is great for kids wading and poking worms under a bobber in search of resident bluegill.

The area can be reached from I-5 via US Highway 299 from Redding or via Highway 89 from Mt. Shasta City.

Along the Way: Besides hiking the Rim Trail or the Burney Falls Loop in the state park, nearby attractions include Crystal Lake Fish Hatchery, Subway Cave at Old Station, and Lassen Volcanic National Park.

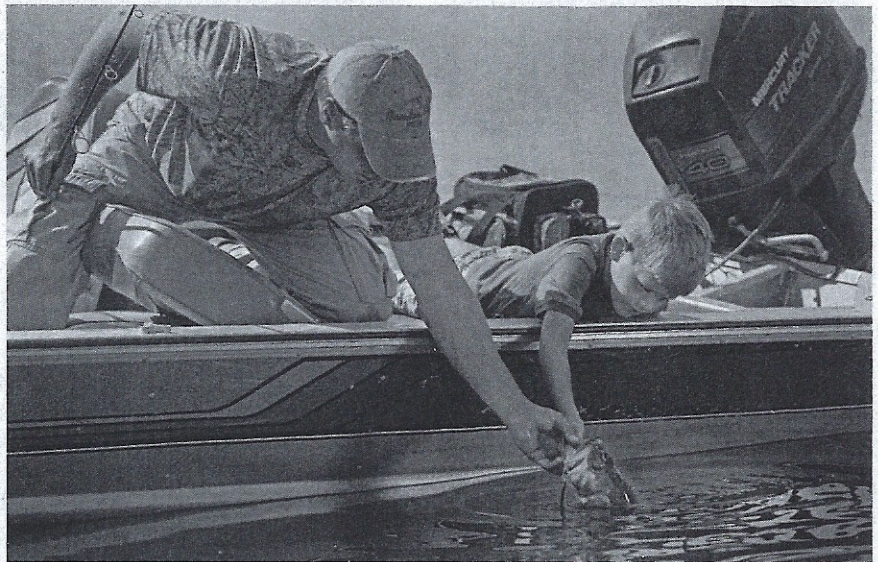
Hundreds of campsites, motels, rental cabins and RV parks are found in and nearby Burney. The Burney Chamber of Commerce (phone: 530-335-2111; online at BurneyChamber.com) can provide additional information.

▶ SHAVER LAKE

Encompassing 13 miles of pine-forested shoreline, Shaver Lake lies 50 miles east of Fresno in the Sierra foothills. Situated a little more than a mile above sea level, Shaver is very popular with the Central Valley crowd trying to escape the summer heat. Many of them will camp and boat on the lake, while anglers are drawn to its rainbow trout, kokanee salmon and smallmouth bass.

Maintained with catchable-sized 'bows from the CDFW and brood-stock fish to 4 pounds, courtesy of the Shaver Lake Trophy Trout Project, trout fishing Shaver Lake more than stands up to the heavy fishing pressure.

Fishing in the moving water from the inlet tunnel is always a good spot, says Dick Nichols, who operates fam-



Bass fishing and trout fishing gather the bulk of family fishing interests in California, oftentimes combined with camping outings at abundant campgrounds located at many of the top fishing sites.

ily-oriented Dick's Fishing Charters (phone: 559-841-2740; online at DicksFishingCharters.com). But early season fishermen often troll silvery, minnow-imitating spoons high in the water column from the Sierra Marina across the face of the dam to Shaver Point. As summer warms, downriggers help take lures to necessary depths. When mid-day skiers take over the main lake, the series of secluded coves on the southern shore often produce for patient anglers drifting Power Worms or Power Eggs on a sliding sinker.

Successful kokanee seekers troll Wedding Rings behind Sling Blades at depths between 35 to 70-feet along the dam.

From Fresno, drive 52 miles east on Highway 168 to the town of Shaver Lake,

then drive an additional 5 miles to the lake.

Along the Way: Rancheria Falls, Indian Pools and Mono Hot Springs are popular drive-to venues. Near and far horse-pack trips are offered by D&F Pack Station (phone: 559-893-3220; online at DandFPackstation.squarespace.com) and High Sierra Pack Station (phone: 559-299-8297; online at HighSierraPackStation.net).

Camping options can be explored by contacting the Sierra National Forest Service/Pineridge Ranger District at (559) 855-5360. Call Sierra Marina at (559) 841-3324 for current fishing conditions.

▶ VIRGINIA LAKES

Nestled amid towering peaks and pine forest of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National

Forest south of Bridgeport, few destinations are as varied as the Virginia Lakes triumvirate. The peaceful mountain setting, located a nearly 10,000 feet above sea level in the eastern Sierras, awaits both anglers and family outings.

Heavily stocked by CDFW with various sized rainbows plus bonus trout to 5 pounds, Trumbull, Big Virginia and Little Virginia lakes make up the heart of the Virginia Lakes Resort (phone: 760-647-6484; online at VirginiaLakesResort.com). Services include campsites, cabins, a restaurant, general store and tackle shop while the fishing is some of the best in the region.

Fly-rodders and bait-and-wait anglers alike routinely fool schooling trout that tend to cruise the shallow shoreline structure of the lakes. With power boats prohibited, float-tube fishermen find tranquility in the thick-forested environment. Those willing to test loftier waters will find diminutive brookies swim in seven small alpine lakes tucked within a 2-mile circle in the adjoining Hoover Wilderness, Yosemite National Park and beyond.

Reputable area information of all kinds is available from Jim Reid of Ken's Alpine Sporting Goods in Bridgeport at (760) 932-7707, or online at KensSport.com.

From Highway 395 at Conway Summit, turn onto Virginia Lakes Road and drive 6 miles to the lakes/trailhead.

Along the Way: Local attractions include horseback rides, exploring historic mining structures, ancient Mono Lake, Bodie State Historic Park and Travertine Hot Springs.

For camping information, contact Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest/Bridgeport Ranger District, phone: 760-932-7070; online at ww.fs.usda.gov/recarea/htnf/recarea/?recid=65162.

BISHOP AREA

The glacier-carved, serrated backbone of the Sierra Nevada Crest guards a trio of manmade lakes approaching 10,000 feet elevation in the Inyo National Forest. Excellent trout fishing amid spectacular and intimate scenery stands off pathways that lead into the backcountry. From Highway 395 in Bishop, follow West

Line Street (Highway 168) for 18 miles to the headwater lakes of the forks.

The CDFW regularly stocks rainbows in South, Sabrina and North lakes. To pique angler interest, private concessionaires plant additional trout in the 5- to 8-pound range. Fishermen at all three lakes soak Power Bait, inflated night crawlers or retrieve Mepps, Vibrax or Panther Martin spinners along banks and dams. Boaters troll along deep channels and inlet areas with Thomas Buoyant spoons or silver/gold Kastmaster spoons doused in krill scent.

Bishop Creek's middle and south forks hold heavy concentrations of trout along roadside sections. Probe the stream with salmon eggs rigged with just enough weight to run them deep with the current for willing 'bows. Bush-whack the lesser-visited sections to surprise a hefty holdover rainbow or wild brown trout.

Intake II produces well for kids plying the inlet areas with a fly-and-bubble setup. Weir Pond is ideal for beginners learning fly-casting techniques.

Those seeking golden trout waters near the clouds find trailheads leading to the John Muir Wilderness and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. Use gossamer-like, 12-foot leaders with a Purple Haze or Parachute Adams fly above a Psycho Prince or Pheasant Tail nymph. Successful anglers use stealth and patience to capture the gaudily-attired state fish.

Both Rainbow Pack Outfitters in Bishop (phone: 760-873-8877; online at Rainbow.zb-net.com) and Bishop Pack Outfitters in Aspendell (phone: 760-873-4785; online at BishopPackOutfitters.net) cater to day-rides or backcountry junkets.

Solid local fishing information is available from Jared Smith at Parchers Resort near South Lake (phone: 760-873-4177; online at ParchersResort.net).

Along the Way: Laws Railroad Museum, Keough Hot Springs and the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest are nearby attractions.

Numerous Inyo National Forest Service campgrounds are located along the three forks. Contact White Mountain Ranger District (phone: 760-873-2500; online at www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/inyo/recarea/?recid=40292).

BIG BEAR LAKE

Sitting at just more than 6,700 feet elevation in the San Bernardino National Forest, Big Bear Lake steadfastly remains an ideal destination for Southern California families seeking excellent fishing combined with cool mountain scenery. A 2,900-acre impoundment with 22 miles of shoreline, it is one of the most heavily stocked lakes in the state. Primarily noted for its rainbow trout fishery, it also holds largemouth bass, crappies and bluegill.

While the CDFW routinely plants catchable-sized trout up to 3/4-pound, it is the trophy-sized 3- to 5-pound 'bows, courtesy of the Big Bear Chamber of Commerce, that provide steady fishing action from late spring through fall.

The west end of the lake is highly popular with bait-and-wait bank anglers. Boat anglers enjoy consistent success trolling minnow-imitating spoons, plugs or flasher-crawler combinations along the deep channel between the north-east shore and Boulder Bay. Surface poppers, topwater plugs or plastics on drop-shot rigs account for largemouth bass when worked along the shoreline reeds. Suspending worms under bobbers off the docks can keep kids busy with hyperactive panfish.

Big Bear Charter Service (phone: 909-635-7501; online at FishBigBear.net) in the town of Big Bear Lake specializes in family sessions, offering opportunities for adults and kids to fish together.

From Highland, follow State Highway 330 east to the State Highway 18 junction and drive 30 miles to the lake.

Along the Way: Side trips in and around Big Bear Lake include guided off-road tours, a bike park and tram rides at the Snow Summit Ski Resort.

Commercial camping and campsites operated by the San Bernardino National Forest Service are available around the lake, along with resort-styled facilities. Big Bear Marina (phone: 909-866-3218; online at BigBearMarina.com) has rental boats of all sorts available. For more information, contact the Big Bear Discovery Center (phone: 909-382-2790) operated by the National Forest Service on the north shore of Big Bear Lake. ■