

both of which contain brookies.

The fish benefit from a solid insect food base. Seemingly in order with the lake's carrying capacity, the fish maintain moderate densities, ranging in size from 7 to 12 inches. At 1.5 acres, the lower lake is shallow, with reeds enveloping most of its open, rock and turf shoreline. Retrieving flies over the submerged weed lines along the littoral zone proved pleasantly successful for colorful, zealous

PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

## Marie Louise Lakes, CA

By Don Vachini

With 12,237-foot Hurd Peak peering over my right shoulder, I cautiously maneuvered along the edge of the lake and managed to drop a beadhead nymph within a few inches of the overhanging grass. The euphoria of an instant take was tempered as the culprit immediately imbedded itself into the weedy tangle. Testing both nerves and gossamer tippet, I was doubtful I'd land this fish.

It was an October morning, and Brandon Parker and I were visiting the pair of in-tandem Marie Louise Lakes tucked on a tiny, wooded bench along the east side of the Sierra Nevada crest west of Bishop. Branching off the main Bishop Pass Trail, we had followed a thinly marked spur for 0.25 mile to this well-hidden duo. Upper Marie Louise Lake (10,650 feet) and Lower Marie Louise Lake (10,645 feet) are fed by snowmelt from the northern slopes of 11,682-foot Chocolate Peak and their feeder stream filters through a small, aspen-fringed meadow. Escaping flowage seeps downhill into the South Fork of Bishop Creek.

These small lakes were named for Marie Louise Parcher, who along with her husband, W.C. Parcher, founded Parcher's Camp during the 1920s. Both had a significant hand in introducing trout into many of the backcountry basin waters. Transported in milk and coffee cans via mule train, brook and rainbow trout established breeding populations in several lakes, including the pair named for Mrs. Parcher,

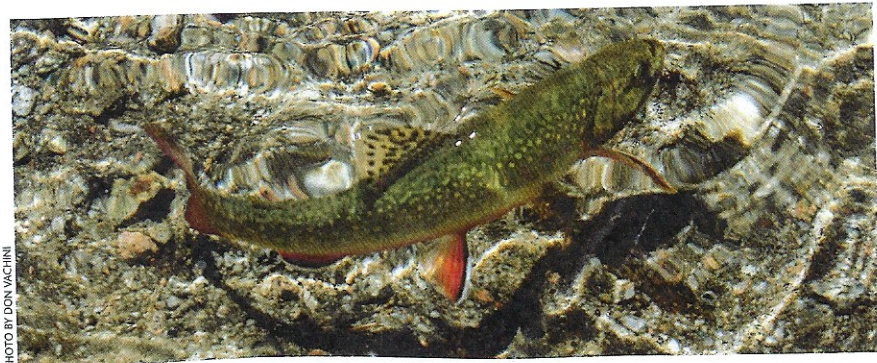


PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

brookies, but none more than 8 inches.

Scouting from above the 2-acre upper lake revealed deep water with varying ranges of structure. It became apparent that there would be more challenges to reach its guarded trout. Some were moving in and out of the inlet channel, necessitating roll casts to dodge nearby timber. Others cruised beneath the steep, shoreline cliffs where access is nearly impossible by foot. A few fish held tight against the difficult-to-approach meadow shoreline, requiring precise casts parallel to shore. It was here that I hooked the brookie, now hunkered down in the stinky growth.

Despite my initial misgivings, the tippet held. Firm pressure eventually coaxed the fish into open water where it put up a spirited battle, appearing much heavier and stronger than its 11 inches. During the next hour, pugnacious 10- to 12-inch char came to net sparingly but they were certainly a bit better fed than their counterparts in the lower lake.

A 4-weight rod matched with floating line and 9-foot tippet is ideal for presenting size 14 to 18 flies, with favorites being a yellow beadhead Copper John, Zebra Midge,



Adams, Purple Haze, and Elk Hair Caddis, fished either individually or in dry/dropper combinations.

From US Route 395 in Bishop, drive 17 miles on West Line Street then turn left at the South Lake turnoff. Follow the paved road to the Bishop Pass Trailhead at South Lake. After ascending nearly 1 mile along the Bishop Pass Trail, turn at the signed Marie Louise Trail. The season is open from the end of April through November 15. A source of local history, Parchers Resort, (760) 873-4177, [www.parchersresort.net](http://www.parchersresort.net), also provides cabins, supplies, and solid angling advice.

## Texas's Llano River Recovering from Historic Flood Event

By Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Less than a year after a major flood scoured much of the Llano River and left anglers worried about the future of the waterway's renowned bass fishery, biologists with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) found evidence of a recovery.

In late June, TPWD aquatic biologists conducted fish sampling in the river near Castell and discovered large numbers of juvenile largemouth and Guadalupe bass. Preston Bean, the TPWD biologist who is heading up a study looking at recovery of the river's habitat and fish assemblage, reported Guadalupe bass made up 26 percent of the total catch and were at least 10 percent of the catch at each of 10 sampling sites.

"Most Guadalupe bass we collected were spawned this spring and the average length was 2.2 inches," he explained. "The fish appeared to be feeding heavily and had excellent body condition."

The health of the resource was also evident from sampling of other aquatic species present in the river. Archis Grubh, TPWD aquatic ecologist who is studying effects of the flood on aquatic invertebrates, reported seeing a steady repopulation of the invertebrate community, which means plentiful food is available for juvenile sport fish.

While biologists note that it will take time for adult bass to reach pre-flood levels in the Llano River, the presence of large numbers of juveniles indicates the fishery is healthy and on the way to recovery. Based on average growth rates for bass from Hill Country rivers, biologists estimate it will take several years before sizable populations of larger bass inhabit the most adversely impacted reaches of the river. Follow-up fish, habitat, and aquatic invertebrate surveys are planned by TPWD, along with surveys to monitor for aquatic invasive species that often spread during flood events.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

"Keep in mind, last year the Llano River was greatly affected by a 100-year flood event that significantly altered its fish habitat," said John Botros, TPWD River Access Program coordinator. "Many anglers and local landowners expressed concern to us about the status of the fish population following this catastrophic flooding. While the abundance of fish in the river is lower than it was before the flood, we are happy to report that fish populations are showing signs of recovery."

More information on the Llano River flood of 2018, including details on changes to aquatic and riparian habitats, can be found on the Llano River Watershed Alliance's website, [www.llanoriver.org](http://www.llanoriver.org).

*J. Stockard*  
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