

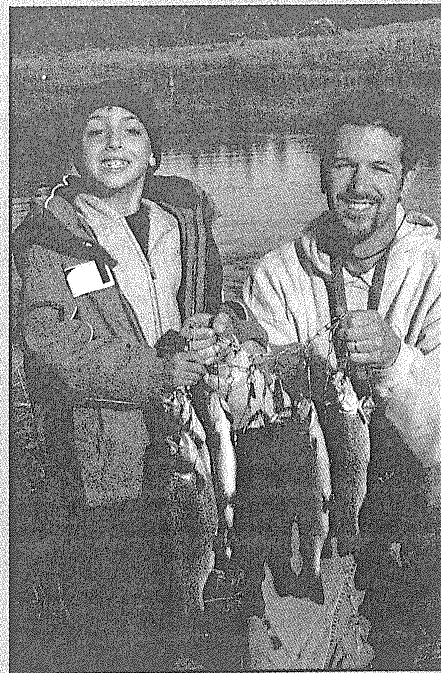
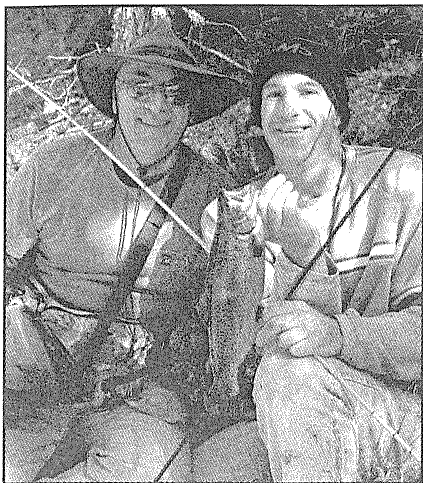
CALIFORNIA GAME & FISH

IN THE FIELD

Beginning in June 1997, California Game and Fish Magazine editor, Burt Carey, recruited me to submit bit pieces for the magazine's monthly In the Field (ITF) page, which encompassed a wide array of outdoor topics.

Beginning with the August, 2006 issue, he assigned the entire 750-word column, with my byline. Following is a compilation of each column through July/August 2019, when the magazine was re-formatted and phased out the ITF column. Peruse and enjoy!

By: Don Vachini



Book One

Issues

August 2006 to December/January 2012

Lake Britton's Late-Summer Angling Options

Nestled in the heart of prime trout country, northern California's Lake Britton offers an unusual anglers' smorgasbord, besides the rainbows, browns and brookies targeted by trout aficionados. Bass-hungry anglers who trek California's Inter-Mountain Area find good late-summer/early fall action with smallmouth bass.

Formed by the Pit 3 Dam on the Pit River, this PG&E impoundment is surrounded by both Shasta National Forest and McArthur-Burney Falls State Park. Thanks to the area's volcanic origin, snowmelt and icy seepage percolates, via a network of subterranean vents, into tributary creeks Burney, Clarke and Hat, as well as the main river. Minerals leached into the watershed stimulate aquatic growth, accounting for a healthy, vibrant food chain.

Prior to the dam's completion in 1930, the Pit River was home to native rainbow and brown trout. But 10 years after its construction, illegally introduced smallmouth bass gave the reservoir a definite warmwater look. Over the past two decades, brook trout have been added to the burgeoning bass, bow and brown fishery.

DFG sampling shows smallies in this lake are healthy and in good numbers. But the resilient bronzebacks don't grow especially large, typically running in the 10- to 12-inch range, though several will push upwards of 2 pounds.

Meanwhile, the trout fishery is a real sleeper. While monitoring the bass, the California Department of Fish and Game manages this water's salmonids with a put-and-grow philosophy. Each year, more than 100,000 fingerling rainbows and some 65,000 sub-catchable brookies are stocked in the reservoir. In certain years, surplus trout from the nearby Crystal Springs Fish Hatchery are also released at season's end. Some end up as forage for the lake's big brown trout, but a good number survive to achieve weights of 1 to 4 pounds, and a few approaching the double digits are landed annually.

Much of the impoundment's shore-

line is difficult to access. A boat provides wide angler access, while a float tube allows for closer scrutiny of bankside structure.

Smallmouth anglers do well to probe boulder-strewn areas where the fish haunt steep dropoffs. To locate bass, cast your favorite crankbaits and soft-plastic lures across deep structure. Heavy-vibrating Rapala, Rebel or Storm crankbaits in bone/orange, crawfish orange, green fleck and brown hues are popular, but many new lures are drawing big strikes, too. Check out the scented Gulp Batwing Frog or Lizard; Berkley's Power Grub, Power Craw and Power Hawg; and the Yum Zellamander, Craw Papi or Craw Bug. Top color patterns include pumpkinseed, peanut butter, tequila sunrise or green-fleck. Cast poppers and other surface lures along shoreline brush. Twitch them every 10 to 15 seconds and watch for a topwater explosion.

Spin-anglers enjoy bass fishing best on light-action, 5- to 7-foot spinning rods and reels loaded with 4- to 6-pound green monofilament. Draw poppers, soft-plastics or slow-running plugs across rocky hideouts.

When fly-rodming for bass, a 4- to 6-weight rod-and-reel system is perfect for tossing large offerings while letting smallmouths show off their fighting abilities. They don't hit violently, so keep all slack out of your line and develop a feel for their slight take. Short, stout 4- to 5-foot 2X or 3X fluorocarbon tippets make for solid hooksets and keep hyperactive bass from fleeing into brush or roots. The best-producing fly patterns include meaty, size 6 to 8 Rubberlegs, Shenandoah Chugger, Ratlin' Foam Frog or Deerhair Bass Bug poppers; and brown, yellow or olive Woolly Buggers, Matukas, Muddler Minnows or Bullet Head streamers.

Anglers after brown, rainbow and brookies should concentrate on the moving water of inlets or deeper channels, where the cold, incoming water carries food and oxygen. While Pit's main riverbed contains prime big fish structure and cover, the smaller, less-visited coves in Burney and

Clarke creeks offer productive early and late-day ventures.

Float-tube anglers working the slow-moving inlet sections with 2- to 3-weight systems usually toss size 12 to 18 dry flies, including the Caddis Emerger, Elk Hair Caddis, Parachute Hopper, Foam Body Ant and Downwing Sally. Others slow-twitch underwater bugs such as weighted Zebra Midge, Mysis Shrimp, Chironomid Bomber, Bead Brassie, Golden Stone, Translucent Pupa and Sparkle Pupa nymph patterns. Don't be surprised if one of these patterns fools a hefty native trout or holdover cousin.

Spin-fishing tactics work best with light to ultra-light spinning rods and reels equipped with smooth drags and loaded with extra limp 4- to 6-pound monofilament. If confined to the shoreline, work near incoming water. Bouncing worms or Pautzke's red or yellow salmon eggs over moving water will often provide solid results. But patient bait dunkers often soak a variety of rainbow, chartreuse or orange glitter Berkley Power Baits in the sloping channels for success.

Troll fishermen enjoy their share of the action, too. Downriggers are a must for probing deep along the submerged riverbed. Use fish finders and GPS waypoints to isolate depths, temperature, and fish concentrations. Popular lures for trolling include Cripp lure, Little Cleo and Thomas Buoyant spoons, frequently doused with liquid krill. Other offerings include the Rapala X Rap in silver, rainbow-trout and silver-blue patterns; and the Bleeding Wild Shiner and Jointed Minnow in rainbow- and brown-trout hues.

Lake Britton's onsite and nearby facilities, reached via Highway 299/89 from the town of Burney, include bait and tackle shops, a boat launch, campsites, boat rentals and groceries. For more information, call McArthur-Burney Falls State Park at (530) 335-2777; or Vaughn's Sporting Goods at (530) 335-2381 or online at www.citlink.net/~vaughnfly. —Don Vachini □

Feather River Salmon

Sacramento Valley anglers seeking to explore a lesser-known source of quality kings with lesser crowding will find that the Feather River provides a notable chinook fishery from early September through mid-October.

Migrating salmon can be found throughout the 60-plus-mile main stem, which flows from Oroville to its confluence with the Sacramento River near Live Oak.

However, the 10 miles of riverway from the Thermalito Afterbay downstream to the town of Gridley is the hottest.

The state-of-the-art Feather River Fish Hatchery, located at the base of Oroville Dam, makes this river a rich salmon factory. The hatchery holds annual goals of 5 million spring chinook smolts, 6 million fall-run smolts and 2 million post-fall-run smolts.

According to hatchery statistics, upward of 40,000 kings run this tail-water annually.

Offering bank or drift-boat anglers

numerous runs and riffles, the four-mile Low Flow section runs from the base of Oroville Dam to the Thermalito Outlet. Aggressive waders tackle them with medium- to heavy-action spinning tackle to bounce and retrieve heavy spoons in bottom-ticking, fluttering retrieves.

Fly-fishermen need 7- to 9-weight fly rods and high density, fast-sinking lines to effectively work orange or red bead-head nymphs.

The High Flow section, which offers boaters plenty of opportunities to maneuver, runs from the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet to Gridley and contains large flows with riffles, runs and deep pools interspersed along the way. Holding water on the Feather is more spread out, however.

No doubt, the Outlet hole is the most popular venue and attracts both anglers and fish. Huge amounts of water flow from the "Gates of Hell" to meet the Low Flow stretch and gouge out a huge hole 20 to 30 feet deep, creating a "natural" holding area.

Side-drifting roe and plying large Mepps and Panther Martin spinners are very popular among shore-

anglers. Casting and retrieving heavily weighted yarn flies with beads through the fast current also brings success.

By far, the most successful anglers bounce roe over the salmon. Boaters in the fast-moving, swirling Afterbay flows must constantly monitor and maneuver their crafts to keep roe with 10 to 12 ounces of lead in the swirl. Riffles that have good current flow and depths of 7 to 8 feet also hold salmon. For these conditions, most boaters prefer to backtroll K-14, K-15 and K-16 Kwikfish, Lighted K-16 Xtremes, and K-16 chrome with chartreuse heads. Flatfish, Bombers, Hot Shots and Wee Wart plugs are also productive. Liberally apply Pautzke's Liquid Krill on sardine wraps and Gel Krill on all plugs.

In addition to the Afterbay Hole, top locales also include the Power Lines, East and West Runways, Charlie's Hole, Washout Hole, Pump Hole and Clay Bank Hole.

The Feather has considerably warmer water temperatures than other larger rivers, and its salmon — which commonly range between 10 to 15 pounds, and upward of 30 pounds on occasion — tend to be wary. They are more alert to sounds of motors or anchor chains that create underwater vibrations that spook fish.

The best time to fish is midweek to avoid crowds, frightened fish and tangled lines from too many boats working the smaller holes.

Boat anglers do well to work the holes by idling slowly up the sides of the river, while attempting to read the water and observe which way the fish are moving from the hole. Once you've established that line of movement, idle carefully into position to intercept the moving fish and start backtrolling.

Reputable guides include Jim Zanicco at (530) 673-5716, Bob Wigham at (530) 222-8058, and Barry Collins at (530) 755-2624. For lodging, access, supplies and additional info, contact the Oroville Chamber of Commerce by phone at <http://www.oro-ville-city.com>, or on line at (530) 538-2542. —Don Vachini □

DFG Instructor Of The Year

Derek Fong, of the Quail Unlimited Chapter of Santa Clarita, was presented last spring with the prestigious Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor of the Year (Southern Division) award. This award is presented annually by the California Department of Fish and Game to recognize outstanding service, dedication and exceptional contributions to Hunter Safety in the Golden State.

Derek has been a hunter education instructor for the past 11 years. During his tenure, he served as chief instructor in over 85 courses, certified approximately 3,500 students, and donated more than 1,200 hours to hunter education.

Through the Quail Unlimited Chapter of Santa Clarita, Derek developed a team of highly dedicated and qualified volunteers including five hunter education instructors, 15 NRA Certified Instructors and 15 range safety officers. Derek is the first to acknowledge SCVQU members for their tireless dedication, which helps him produce an interactive, innovative and educational class each and every month of the year.

Among his accomplishments, Derek is an NRA Certified Rifle, Shotgun and Pistol Instructor, Range Safety Officer, has served on the SCVQU Board of Directors including four terms as Chapter Chairman, since 1992. In 2005, Derek received the Golden Quail Volunteer Award for the Western Region. He has been a member of QU since 1992 and is a Lifetime Member of both the NRA and IHEA. Derek has successfully developed hunting and shooting programs to recruit and retain California hunters, including "Women's Only" and "Juniors' " pheasant hunts. He has helped organize a Junior trap team and has qualified more than 350 Boy Scouts for their Shotgun Merit Badge. □

Kirman's Behemoth Brookies

Kirman Lake, located in the Toiyabe National Forest, has gained a well-earned reputation for producing out-sized brook trout. Some of the best fishing for these leviathan char occurs when fall paints the eastern Sierra landscape yellow and orange and temperatures begin to plummet.

Sitting in a bowl-like depression, surrounded by open, sage-covered hills north of Bridgeport, the lake on the West Walker drainage dispels the myth of diminutive brookies.

According to Curtis Miliron, a fisheries biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game in its Bishop office, Kirman Lake routinely produces rotund 15- to 18-inch, 1- to 3-pound brook trout. Individual fish, he says, commonly range up to 20 inches long and weigh 4 to 5 pounds!

Their growth rate is phenomenal, with girths commonly proportional to lengths. Local anglers often refer to the brookies as "footballs."

This 70-acre impoundment enjoys a richer-than-usual mix of nutrients, plus a solid terrestrial smorgasbord courtesy of the nearby wooded environment. Miliron believes the incredibly dense population of freshwater Gammarus shrimp accounts for an abnormally high caloric intake that's key to the brook trout's prodigious pigskin proportions.

A short 3-mile hike and nerves of steel place anglers within reach of these monsters. But not all fishermen will land trout at Kirman. Its bank is heavily ringed with tules, limiting much of the shoreline access.

Timing is one key component to fishing success here. From mid- to late October, resident brookies tend to gather in huge pods and stage along the shallows within easy casting distance. Shore-bound anglers do well using a 6- to 7-foot light-action spinning rod and reel, loaded with thin-diameter, 6- to 8-pound mono. Among the best lures with this gear are Krocodile spoons; blue/silver Kastmaster spoons; rainbow-trout patterned Thomas Bouyant and Phoebe spoons; yellow, brown or orange Bingo Bugs; and a variety of

small Rapala and Rebel plugs. A fly-and-bubble setup works well, too, when spin-fishermen have left their fly rods behind.

Whenever you can, retrieve lengthy casts parallel to the shoreline, although the challenge of a bank angler landing a fish through the reeds rolls the odds largely in the quarry's favor.

Due to relatively few openings along the bank, the absolute best way to fish this lake is via a float tube. With this advantage, fly-rodders utilize 5- to 7-weight outfits paired with a sinking or sink-tip line to achieve the best results.

Local fly-fishermen use a slow retrieve to pull size 8 to 12 Scuds in olive, green, champagne or orange patterns near the podded fish. Some prefer to dabble bead-headed Brassie, Zug Bug or Bird's Nest patterns near the reed-lines. While tedious, slow-twitched presentations often result in a hookup. Fluorocarbon tippets in the 8- to 10-pound class are well suited for turning the girthy residents away from cover.

Topwater offerings rarely work here, but subsurface presentations are highly effective because shrimp are so amazingly thick at this lake. Brookies swim through heavy concentrations literally with their mouths open, consuming all in their path. Since this tiny crustacean is photophobic, working imitations from lighter to darker water is the norm.

Despite this voracious eating habit, trout remain exasperatingly difficult to fool, primarily because they have so much food that any anglers' imitations blend in well with the naturals.

That's why some anglers prefer slightly larger fly patterns — orange or olive Scuds, bead-headed Assassins or yellow Sculpins — in size 6. Others find attractor patterns as their top-getters — flies such as the Bunny Leech in gaudy white, pink, bubblegum and flesh-tone colors; the Rainbow Bunny, the Micro Flesh and Filet O' Flesh.

Protected from both predators and anglers, many trout hold tight against the lakeside undercut edges of the

morass-type growth. Float-tube trolling a few yards outside this structure can be very productive. The most popular patterns include the Leech, Woolly Bugger and Crystal Bugger, sizes 8 to 10, in chartreuse, orange, purple, olive or brown colors; and yellow or white Zonkers.

Adding Pautzke's Liquid Krill to the flies or lures you retrieve along these submerged shelves often provides the advantage needed to dupe these wary residents.

Polaroid sunglasses help anglers pinpoint fish through glare and surface film everywhere. It's no different at Kirman. Rather than blind casting, use your quality sunglasses to identify a specific target. Then cast in front of the fish and wait patiently. Be primed to detect any subtle movement of the strike indicator and — very gently — set the hook with a short, side-to-side flick of your wrist. If the strike is missed, just let it settle. Quite often, another take occurs in short order.

Special fishing restrictions — including barbless artificials only, and a two-fish, 16-inch minimum-size limit — help maintain stocks at Kirman Lake, which rests at about 7,000 feet elevation in this high-chaparral countryside.

To reach Kirman Lake, travel 17 miles north of Bridgeport on U.S. Highway 395, turn left onto Highway 108, and proceed less than a mile to a small turnout. Park, cross the stile and hike or bike approximately 3 miles to the lake. The U.S. Geological Survey map, titled "Bridgeport, California-Nevada" offers excellent illustration of nearby trails and surrounding terrain and lakes, is available by writing to the USGS, Box 25046 Denver Fed. Ctr., Denver, CO 80255.

You can reach Curtis Miliron at the CA DFG office in Bishop, at (619) 872-1171. For the most local updates on the brook trout fishing action at Kirman Lake, call Jim Reid of Ken's Alpine Sporting Goods in Bridgeport, at (760) 932-7707, or check out their Web site, www.kenssports.com. □

By Don Vachini

Donner Lake's Winter Trophies

Hardcore anglers willing to brave December's freezing temperatures, rain and snow stand a reasonable chance of landing a mega-trophy mackinaw or brown trout at Donner Lake. Indeed, the optimal time to target this outsized quarry is when the snowy slopes are filled with skiers and the lake is virtually deserted.

Collecting snowmelt from several spectacular peaks, Donner is located just off Highway 80 near the town of Truckee. Sitting in Tahoe National Forest at an elevation of 5,963 feet, this relatively small lake is more than 3 miles long, three-quarters of a mile wide and encompasses more than 7 miles of shoreline — while remaining a well-kept winter secret among in-the-know anglers.

Heavily planted with 27,000 pounds of rainbow catchables by the DFG during summer months, the lake also supports a limited kokanee population, in addition to the reclusive lake and brown trout.

Donner's drastically plummeting depths that reach to nearly 300 feet, plus a concentrated smorgasbord of disoriented planted trout, make it highly conducive to producing fast-growing specimens.

While most macks average 3 to 8 pounds, double-digit fish are fairly common. A few giants approaching 30 pounds are caught each winter, with the lake record a whopping 34-pounder! Also running between 3 to 5

pounds, fair numbers of browns will approach the mid-20-pound category.

Since both species are fall spawners, they scatter and prowl relentlessly for food during inclement weather months. A boat is the only feasible way to pursue these large trout.

Normally concentrated near the bottom along humps or underwater ridges during spring and summer, hefty *Salvelinus namaycush* often patrol within the top 10 feet of the surface during winter. They are most active (and vulnerable) during early morning hours and on dark, cloudy or stormy days.

Since much of Donner's bottom is deep, there is no real snag danger, so particularly heavy tackle is not necessary. A 6- to 6 1/2-foot light-to-medium action rod and level-wind reel capable of holding 200 to 250 yards of 16- to 20-pound-test are more than sporting. Thin-diameter lines cut easily through the water, preventing bows and allowing more detectible hits. Whenever possible, tie lures directly to the line.

To topline, run a pair of rods in the top 10 to 15 feet and two on downriggers between 20 and 40 feet. Using sonar, reposition the depth of the lures at the level where you mark fish. Since mega-macks feed heavily on kokanee, minnows and planted trout, large lures that replicating this forage are ideal. Six- or 8-inch broken-back Rebels or Rapalas patterned in silver/black, black/gold, chartreuse/white, black/orange, kokanee and rainbow are highly reliable.

Slow-trollers pulling green Kwikfish or Flatfish in silver, white, pearl or rainbow behind flashers entice

large fish in shallow water, while other anglers prefer to fast-troll at speeds between 2 and 4.5 mph. With lures up to 200 feet behind the boat, run zigzag patterns while varying speeds and depths of the presentation.

When radar pinpoints individual fish or a small group off such points as China and Beaver coves, the Guardrail, Loch Laven and the hump just west of the boat ramp, jigging 2 ounce Horizon Perk Minnow, Buzz Bombs or Apex in black/silver, blue/silver and chartreuse shades can be deadly. Let the lure sink to the bottom, reel in a few turns and then jig in sweeping, 5- or 6-foot arcs. Most takes will be on the fall, so keep in close contact with the jig.

A small but stable population of browns, maintained by natural propagation, is the toughest species of trout to target. Ironically, most wary leviathans are caught incidentally, usually during the nastiest weather. Many of the same lures that catch macks work on predatory browns, especially when there's a good chop on the water or dark, cloudy skies.

Anglers trolling a flasher-night crawler combo or silvery spoons dragged behind a dodger will score, but swim baits are the most productive. Since macks feed heavily on stocked trout in shallow water, Rebel holographic minnows, Yo-Zuri and Bomber Long A's offer solid imitations. By far the most reliable bait is an 8-inch Castaic Soft Bait or Megabait Charlie swimbait, which to these predators, replicates a planted trout. A side-planer, worked close to shore yet near dropoffs, is a good bet for browns that never stray too far from the safety of deep water.

Whether pursuing browns or lakereels, Liquid Krill releases a definite scent trail that sometimes proves to be the deciding factor in getting a mega-trophy to commit.

Mountain Hardware in Truckee at (530) 587-4844 and Donner Lake Marina at (530) 582-5112 can provide up-to-the-minute information on conditions at this winter fishery while Sierra Anglers Guide Service at (530) 582-5689 or www.sierraanglers.net offers a professional, reliable service.—Don Vachini □

First-Class Waterfowlers

The California Waterfowlers Hall of Fame has inducted its first class.

- Bert McKee (1904-1991), president of Ducks Unlimited, dedicated 54 years to waterfowl conservation.
- Bill Ready (1938-2001), president of the California Waterfowl Association, dedicated 35 years of his life to the waterfowl resource.
- Robert "Bob" Eberhardt (1927-1994) was president of Ducks Unlimited.
- Dr. Dennis Raveling (1939-1991) inspired a commitment to waterfowl in many of today's leaders in the field while serving as professor of wildlife, specializing in ecology at the University of California at Davis.
- Harvey Sorensen (1899-1979) was co-founder and past president of Ducks Unlimited.
- Warren C. Bud Rienecker (1927-1991) was a waterfowl biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game for more than 30 years. □

Gualala River Steelhead Secret

Anglers who prefer to pursue their steelhead in smaller rivers will find the intimate settings of the Gualala River to be an ideal choice.

Indeed, this bucolic Sonoma County stream consistently produces feisty specimens that typically top out between 6 and 10 pounds, with fish up to 15 pounds not uncommon.

Draining vast, steeply inclined sections of the Coastal Mountains north of Fort Ross, the north, south and Wheatfield forks gather an abundance of muscle before they merge. From here, the main stem courses through a thick redwood forest, paralleling the rugged coastline for about 30 miles before entering the Pacific Ocean at the town of Gualala.

Over the past several years, according to Craig Bell, a guide with the Greenriver Guide Service, an ambitious plan to assist recovery of this narrow water has taken place — and with remarkable results. And as yet, not that many people know about it.

Under the supervision of California Department of Fish and Game, volunteers release upwards of 30,000 smolts per year, hatched from eggs of spawners actually caught on the river. In addition, ongoing habitat restoration, closures and the implementation of special regulations have significantly increased the anadromous runs each of the past five years. The entire north fork is closed to fishing, as is the south fork above its confluence with, and including, the Wheatfield branch. These off-limit headwater sectors offer not only respite for spawners, but a secluded nursery for juvenile rainbows.

Special regs allow only barbless hooks and mandate that all native fish be released immediately. Nov. 1 through March 31, one hatchery fish may be retained. In addition, fishing from a flotation device from the confluence of the North Fork to the Highway 1 bridge is prohibited from Nov. 15 through Feb. 28.

Bell concedes that catching fish on the Gualala often depends on timing:

Sometimes the fish are there, sometimes not.

"Anglers first on the water are often the more successful. Already-wary fish become spooked when facing a gauntlet of anglers," he said.

He added that the stretch of river from below the Highway 1 Bridge to tidewater is not only the easiest accessed, but fresh-run metalheads hole up here while they acclimate to fresh water. When you see them roll — usually during high tide or the first two hours of the outgoing tide — cast silvery Kastmasters, Little Cleos, Flatfish or Vibrax lures or size 2-6 Black Ghost, Gray Ghost, Hot Flash Minnow or Bipolar Baitfish.

County Road 501 joins County Road 502 and provides entry to tidewater. Reach the section west of Highway 1 by following the county road just south of town until it ends along the North Fork. You can walk to the river from both parking areas. Get to the river's upper fishing limits by the Annapolis Road off Highway 1, and follow it to the twin bridges.

Shore-anglers successfully bounce bait and drag lures through likely runs, drifts and seams in and out of the main current. A 7- to 9-foot, medium-sized rod with plenty of backbone, and a reel with a smooth operating drag system are essential. Six- to 10-pound line in a light green shade, and terminal gear with a 3-foot leader and pencil lead or slinky to help keep the offering on the bottom, completes the rigging. Fresh roe is always a popular choice, but other lure selections include Glo Bugs, Puff Balls, corkies, Drift Balls, Cheaters and Okies. When water's on the cloudy side, noisy lures such as Spin-N-Glo, Swiss Blinkers and Panther Martins seem to be more attractive.

In slightly clear water, fly-tossers opting for a 9-foot, 6- to 8-weight system with a sink-tip line will often find success presenting size 4 to 8 Polar Shrimp, Bead Head Egg in red, pink or flaming orange, Glo Bugs, tangerine or apricot-hued soft milking egg, pink wiggle egg or flame bunny leech patterns.

Notable hotspots include the North Fork Hole, Switchvale, the Miner Hole and Mill Bend. □

Kids Set World Records, Too

Long recognized as the keeper of both saltwater and freshwater angling records, the International Game Fish Association has opened a world of record possibilities for California youngsters.

Over the last decade, four new record divisions have been established, creating over 1,300 opportunities to set a record, while presenting a meaningful opportunity to bring children into the sport of fishing. Male and female junior divisions include Small Fry (to 10 years) and Junior (11 to 16 years).

In addition, state-specific records are also available for largemouth bass, striped bass (landlocked), bluegill, catfish and rainbow trout in 4-, 12- and 20-pound line and tippet classes.

Of the 327 game fish species, more than 40 are found in Golden State waters or just off the coast. Favorable freshwater locales include:

- Castaic, San Vicente, Amador and Clear lakes for largemouth bass;
- Trinity Lake for smallmouth bass;
- Silverwood Lake, San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay for landlocked striped bass; and
- Shaver Lake, Stampede and Indian Valley reservoirs for kokanee.

The Eastern Sierra from Bridgeport to Bishop maintains a lofty reputation for brook, brown, cutthroat, golden and rainbow trout.

Saltwater hopefuls will find sturgeon, California halibut, striped bass and several varieties of shark along coastal bays, while yellowtail are found at varying distances off Southern California.

All catches must be in compliance with the rules and regulations established by IGFA guidelines. For a list of available species, applications or further information, contact IGFA at 300 Gulf Stream Way, Dania Beach, FL 33004. Call (954) 927-2628 or visit igfa.org. □

By Don Vachini

Tracking Down Freshwater Stripers

Despite chilly, windblown shores, some torrid action for large freshwater striped bass is probably taking place right now on a pair of Central Valley water-storage facilities. In fact, this is a good time of year to try for a wide range of striper sizes, including world-class specimens!

Massive San Luis Reservoir contains 12,700 surface acres with 65 miles of shoreline. Adjoining O'Neill Forebay has 12 miles of shoreline along with its 2,700 surface acres. Built as part of federal and state water projects to prevent storm runoff from flooding the California Aqueduct and the Delta-Mendota Canal, these reservoirs are located between Gilroy and Los Banos.

Beginning in 1967, countless immature striped bass were sucked into massive Delta pumps and delivered to these reservoirs, flourishing anonymously thanks to the abundance of threadfin shad. Over the years, the state Department of Fish and Game has added more than 3 million planters, the largest lake-stocking in the state. Most fish range between 10 to 15 inches and 1 to 3 pounds, but 25- to 40-pound specimens are present. A true leviathan, a 67-plus-pounder was caught by Hank Ferguson in 1992 — the current all-tackle world record for landlocked striped bass!

You're also going to find that several line- or tippet-class world records have also been established here over the past decade and a half.

Birds are often the key to pinpointing action on these expansive waters. Schools of *Morone saxatilis* relentlessly try to surround shad and push them to the surface, creating a feeding frenzy. Look for flocks circling, hovering or diving into the water. Once itinerant feeders are located, action can be red-hot for anglers using any of four popular methods: trolling, casting, jigging or baiting.

Boaters have the distinct advantage of sonar to probe for deep-holding schools, to get better positioning for bait placement and to respond to concentrations of birds over baitfish.

When randomly searching for suspended stripers, anglers often tow lures at different levels until schools are located, then continually crisscross the locale. Medium- to heavy-action spin or spin-casting rods and reels loaded with limp, thin-diameter lines in the 15- to 20-pound-test range are sporting, yet have enough backbone to handle a heavy bruiser.

A spreader setup using a yellow 1/4- to 1/3-ounce Hair Raiser on the short line and a broken-back Rebel on the long line makes a very productive setup. Anglers also score with a 6- to 8-inch Castaic Soft Trout or Mega Bait Charlie swimbaits.

Trollers find success along the east shoreline of Goldeneye Point, Portuguese Creek and Lone Oak Bay as well as Whistler Point, Basalt Bay and just off the Romero Overlook.

Winds over 30 mph often howl through this open landscape, and gale warnings are fairly common. But when whitecaps break against the rocks along the length of the dam, in-the-know anglers diligently work the riprap. Heavyweight linesides often find an easy meal here as baitfish get knocked into the large boulders and become easy pickings. Ply the rocks with leadhead jigs dressed with bucktail, live rubber or saddle hackles. Jigs should range from 1/2 to 1/3 ounce. A bright yellow,

green or white Twistertail can prove deadly; purple or black is best for low-light periods. Other popular jigs include Worm Tails and pork in red, white and chartreuse.

Casting swimbaits or silvery 1/2-ounce Hopkins, Needlefish, Kastmaster and Crocodile spoons often get violent responses from voracious feeders. Live shad minnows, pile worms, bloodworms or mudsuckers are preferred baits, but butterfly-cut shad fished on a sliding sinker can prove very effective.

Adventuresome fly-fishermen utilize 7- to 9-weight systems and high-density shooting lines to strip size 2-4 weighted Alf Baitfish, Clouser Minnow, Mushmouth, Flashtail Whistlers and Lefty's Deceivers through feeding boils or parallel to shoreline structure. Good shore areas include Quien Sabe Point, Willow Spring Bay, Dinosaur Point and along the Romero Overlook.

Water pumping usually triggers the O'Neill Forebay bite. The most productive hotspot is under the power lines between Highway 152 and the boat ramp, although boaters towing shad-imitating lures will find trolling routes along the deep canal (Check Station 12 or 13) just inside the levee, parallel to the buoy line and along the face of the dam worthwhile.

Drifting whole or cut anchovies deep through the churning flows seem to work during midday, but Pencil Poppers or Spooks take their share of surface fish during low-light hours or dark, cloudy periods. Bigger fish are regularly found on the outskirts of the current.

You can get here from Highway 5 south. Travel seven miles west on Highway 152 or from Highway 101, driving 33 miles east of Gilroy on Highway 152. There is a pair of boat ramps here, but no boat rentals. A day-use fee is charged. For information, contact the San Luis Reservoir Park at (209) 826-5592. The San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area at (209) 826-1196 or via their Web site, www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=558. You can also call the Santa Nella Trading Company at (209) 826-6020, or Coyote Bait and Tackle (408) 463-0711. □

By Don Vachini



No one is making fun of Ronson "Catman" Smothers after he pulled in this awesome 60-pound blue catfish from Irvine Lake in September.

"It came up like a surfacing sub," said Smothers. "I finally got to fill up the huge salmon net I carry that everyone makes fun of."

Smothers also holds the current Irvine Lake catfish record with a 89.6-pounder caught in 1999. Photo courtesy of Steve Carson.

Off-Season, Right Time For Trout At Rollins Lake

Overwhelmed by scores of pleasure boaters during summer, Rollins Lake belongs to the trout fisherman in the winter months.

Both planted and holdover rainbow and brown trout provide a solid fishery amid peaceful settings — minus large crowds and water-skiers.

Formed by a dam on the Bear River near the town of Colfax, this 850-acre impoundment is managed by the Nevada County Irrigation District as part of the water supply for portions of Nevada and Placer counties. It also gets significant flows from Greenhorn Creek.

Annually from winter through spring, the Department of Fish and Game stocks 11,000 rainbows weighing just under a pound each and 5,400 brown trout. Expect most fish to be in the 10- to 13-inch class, though some rainbow holdovers approach the 2- to 3-pound range. Browns are larger. Some natural spawning takes place in the feeder streams, accounting for a population of remarkable natives.

This impoundment is heavily planted from December through March. That makes it attractive to all types of anglers because there always seems to

be fish willing to be caught.

Shore anglers score especially well after a plant, when disoriented rainbows tend to school in the vicinity of Free Loaders Cove, Long Ravine, the Orchard Springs Swim Beach and along the face of the dam.

Here, many of the newly infused trout are suckers for Vibrax, Panther Martin, Uncle Larry's and Rooster Tail spinners or Kastmaster, Krocodile, Thomas Bouyant and Phoebe spoons retrieved parallel or perpendicular to shore. If water clarity is an issue, Glitter chartreuse, orange or rainbow PowerBait, Sierra Gold, salmon eggs or inflated night crawlers should be on the menu. If lure or bait action slows, inject or douse the offerings in Procure, Crave Gravy, Liquid Krill or Smelly Jelly.

After a brief period, the majority of trout tend to scatter, spreading to areas where shore anglers have difficulty reaching them. Boats, float tubes or canoes then allow more options on the water. A floating craft not only enhances your ability to work steeper sections of bank that shoreline anglers can't reach but also to seek out both fish and structure.

The main channel of the lake and the two feeder arms are the most likely areas of boater production. The most lucrative action is found in the upper 3 to 5 feet of water.

Scatter lines at 5 to 10 feet and others around 3 feet deep to find the level where fish are feeding.

To take a lot of fish, slow-troll small-sized Thomas Bouyant, Needlefish, Bomber, Kastmaster and Dick Nite lures from the face of the dam right down the middle channel. Fluorescent orange, green, pearl white or fire-tiger shades seem to attract plenty of attention.

Fish finders are handy to locate both concentrations and structure here. Since trout never stray too far from the safety of deeper water, especially during midday, seek the submerged river or creekbed and work the channel near the surface zones.

Two of the best spots are the inlets of Bear River and Greenhorn Creek. Though not noted for large specimens, this water will occasionally kick out hold-over brown trout approaching 6 to 7 pounds.

Browns are normally caught by accident, and targeting them requires a bit of savvy and luck. A Sep's Pro Dodger with a Crippure, a Vance's Dodger with a night crawler or a Needlefish by itself during low-light periods can be productive.

Drag sideplaners 200 feet behind you to keep the offering far from the boat. Early-season browns also favor swim baits coupled with a 3/4-ounce jighead or Gulp! Crawler.

Keep in mind that the lake also contains fair populations of largemouth and smallmouth bass, and by late March, they will begin their pre-spawn. The best areas are shallows at the back of coves or brush lines just off the bank. There, yellow or white spinnerbaits, scented plastic worms, weightless Rapalas, Berkley Jerk Shad crankbaits or white, motor oil or purple jigs are very effective on staging bass. Because the water is still cold, the key is slow retrieves, whatever artificial offering you use.

Facilities include two marinas and four boat ramps, plus boat rentals, gas docks and houseboat mooring. In addition, there are two main campgrounds on the lake.

To reach Rollins Lake, go east on Highway 80 to Colfax. Take Highway 174 exit. Follow the signs to the lake. Visit www.rollinslakeresort.com for more information. □

State Launches Fishing Passport Competition

The Department of Fish and Game has launched the Passport Challenge, a statewide fishing incentive and recognition program.

Anglers of all ages and skill levels will be challenged to fish for and capture one of the several different sport fish species that occur in the state.

Participants will be given stamps for each of the passport species they catch. Anglers who achieve high numbers will be recognized for their skill.

More than 40 different species of freshwater fish and 150 species of saltwater fish are included on the master list.

Anglers register by purchasing an annual fishing license. (Ages 15 and under do not need to buy a fishing license to participate.) Each participant will get a fishing passport book to record catches, an identification booklet containing all species of California salt- and freshwater game fish, information about where each species resides throughout the state, plus maps, information and guides.

Check out the Passport Web site, dfg.ca.gov/fishingpassport/index.html for updates. □

By Don Vachini

Lake Valley's Late-Spring Trout Bite

Little-publicized and under-utilized, Lake Valley Reservoir is just beneath most anglers' radar. In late spring, however, in-the-know anglers head to Lake Valley for solitude — and energetic rainbow and brown trout.

Formed by a dam on the North Fork of the American River, this 800-acre reservoir sits on the west slope of the North Sierra Nevada at an elevation of 5,786 feet.

Rimmed by conifers and surrounded by glacier-polished granite, this scenic waterway is tucked in the Tahoe National Forest in the vicinity of Yuba Gap.

Since Lake Valley is off-limits to water-skiing and personal watercraft, it's both aesthetically pleasing and angler-friendly.

The Department of Fish and Game

plants 4,000 catchable-sized rainbows annually. More than 10,000 fingerling 'bows and 1,000 browns are added during the year, usually in the fall.

While the lake is very productive from both a nutrient and forage standpoint, not all the fish are going to be of size, due to a "put-and-grow" management plan that accounts for much larger trout over the course of a few seasons.

The lake isn't necessarily noted as a limit-producer, a fair number of sizeable trout are fooled during early spring when the water warms slightly and trout become livelier.

Holdovers are the most desirable. And many will push 2 pounds, with the occasional 3-pounder finding its way to the net.

Resident trout spend most of their time in the vicinity of the submerged river channel. The reservoir's entire shoreline is extremely shallow. These two factors put bank anglers at a real disadvantage, especially in late summer when drawdown begins.

Indeed, a floating craft enables you

to reach the abrupt dropoffs and also, consistently exploit these productive haunts for both rainbows and browns.

As water warms up and their metabolism increases, trout will expend a bit more energy to chase lures. While many early-season boaters prefer top-lining, others opt for downriggers and dodgers for easy depth adaptation.

Standard lures such as Vibrax or Uncle Larry's spinners, silver and blue Kastmasters, Little Cleos and shad-patterned Needlefish spoons or dodger-crawler combinations will fool the easy-picking planters.

But for holdovers, the most productive lures are small Luhr Jensen Mini Speed Trap, Broken-Back Rebel, Yo-Zuri Pin Minnow or Ex-Cel plugs, and the new line of scented Spoiler Shad and Sweet Cheeks swimbaits.

Dousing these lures with Pautzke's Liquid Krill, Nitro Trout Gravy or Smelly Jelly scents greatly boosts their productivity.

Electronics will not only pinpoint fish, but identify structure as well. Since the bottom here is cluttered with large boulders and assorted snags, eyeballing the sonar screen is mandatory to avoid losing gear.

Drifting a fly-bubble, or letting red salmon eggs, worms or assorted putty baits bounce along the bottom as light afternoon breezes push your boat along, can be a relaxing yet effective method. Although reclusive browns are usually taken incidentally, a very productive tactic involves using a sideplaner to tow rainbow- and brown-patterned crankbaits along the fringes of river-channel contours.

The best locales for boaters appear to be along the dam, the submerged river channel perpendicular to the dam and near incoming flows. But the riverbed adjacent to the island nearest the dam and the mid-point of the lake are prime trolling routes.

A variety of strike-inducing techniques include speeding up and slowing down, grabbing the line and then releasing it, "S"-turns or zigzag maneuvering by the boat driver.

Any change of depth and speed often incites a strike reaction from hungry trout. □

Sea Bass Rebound

During the 1970s and '80s, white seabass virtually disappeared along the southland coast, probably due to commercial over-fishing. For more than a decade, the Ocean Resources Enhancement and Hatchery Program (OREHP) has sought to counter this depletion by releasing more than a million young fish. The bass are staging a strong comeback.

A vision of the late Milton Shedd, one of California's pioneers in recreational angling and marine conservation, this Southern California organization was created to bolster coastal marine fisheries through stock enhancement. The organization began releasing cultured juvenile white seabass in 1986. To date, it has released more than 1.2 million cultured white seabass.

Coupled with the prohibition of drift nets and long lines, this program has clearly accounted for strong species resurgence. Recreational anglers are now catching thousands that range between 30 and 50 pounds.

Scientists at the Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute implant in each juvenile bass's cheek a coded wire tag that contains data about its genealogy, when it was spawned, and when and where it was released.

To help evaluate the program, fishermen are encouraged to turn in to one of 20 collection centers in Southern California the heads of any specimens they catch.

As an incentive, each head you enter qualifies for a pair of \$500 cash prizes determined by lottery drawings.

One club, the Marina del Rey Anglers, has released nearly 90,000 white seabass since 1994.

These fish are spawned at the OREHP's Leon Raymond Hubbard, Jr. Marine Fish Hatchery in Carlsbad.

When they reach about 3 to 4 inches long, they're shipped to one of 15 grow-out facilities where they spend about six to eight months acclimating and growing to 10 and 12 inches. After they reach this size, they are released into the wild fishery. □

By Don Vachini

CALIFORNIA IN THE FIELD

Trout Fishing Heats Up At McCloud

A somewhat isolated jewel resting in Mount Shasta's shadow, McCloud Reservoir provides torrid early-season action for both native and planted rainbow and brown trout.

Gathering flows from the spring-fed McCloud River, this 520-acre impoundment operated by PG&E sits at an elevation of 2,650 feet in Shasta National Forest, 8 miles from the town of McCloud. A sanctuary for a healthy, self-sustaining trout population, its cold water provides both ideal habitat and nutrients for offspring of the stream's original stock, many of which were trapped behind the dam when it was erected in 1965.

A canyon-type reservoir, its steep banks are lined with either posted private sections or rattlesnakes. A boat is the best possibility. Primitive launches exist at Tarantula Gulch, Battle and

Star City creeks and near the dam.

Native bows and browns maintain their genetic integrity under healthy, pristine conditions. The Department of Fish and Game annually plants 18,000 catchable rainbows in the 1/3- to 1/2-pound class. Residents typically range between 8- to 10-inch pan-sizers and holdovers up to 4 and 5 pounds, but most fall between 12 and 15 inches.

Early season often sees anglers working the shallower water at first light, then plying deeper fringes as the sun rises. Trolling parallel to the edges of the deep river channel, within 10 feet of the surface, with Needlefish, Z-Rays, Pro-Secrets, Humdingers, Crippures, Rainbow Runners or flasher-crawler combinations consistently works for the somewhat gullible planters. Larger residents often ambush Kwikfish, Flatfish and Bingo Bug plugs towed across the mouths of tributaries Star City, Battle, Lick and Tarantula Gulch creeks, where their submerged points touch the old river channel.

The absolute best area, however, is

the McCloud River arm near the magnificent McCloud Hearst Castle. Here, cold oxygenated water percolated over lava rock and leached minerals help produce abundant aquatic life. While taking care not to spook the fish, drifting white and shrimp-colored mini-jigs or bouncing threaded night crawlers along the bottom of the gin-clear river channel helps hook vividly colored natives.

Boaters equipped with electronic technology can expect high catch rates. Five-fish limits are common, and catch-and-release anglers often enjoy 30- to 40-fish days. But to catch that many, you must be able to follow the fish to their comfort zone — with a quality locator that can send and receive sonar signals over deep water, and a downrigger or two to bring lures to the magic depth. Vary speed and course. Since fish always look up, it's better to present slightly above the trout as they search for silhouettes against the surface.

The best trout structure for trollers is in the lake's upper third, between the inlet and Star City Creek and Tarantula Gulch where the bottom slopes away deeply.

If you're pursuing browns, trolling small countdown Rapalas, brown trout-patterned Rebels, Bomber Long A, Jointed Shad, or shad swimbaits just off the bottom in Battle, Star City and Panther coves or around the island is a popular way of enticing them. As the fall season nears, browns move into the lake's upper 200 feet and begin staging to spawn.

Shoreline access is limited, but bank anglers will find Tarantula Gulch, the area by the dam and Star City good for cruising trout. Dunking inflated night crawlers or rainbow, chartreuse or orange PowerBait off the bottom is most reliable.

Fan-casting spoons or spinners in varying retrieves is also successful. Douse all offerings with Liquid Krill or Crave Gravy to greatly enhance your odds.

For more information, contact the Siskiyou County Visitors Bureau at (530) 926-3850, or visitsiskiyou.org. —Don Vachini □

Continued on page 56 . . .

Bluegills Fight Terrorism?

At first mention, it seems inconceivable that a tiny warm-water fish could have an impact on this country's fight against terrorism. However, an innovative yet simple plan enlisting bluegill has relieved some of the concerns of homeland security — while helping to safeguard San Francisco's drinking water.

In an attempt to deter terrorist threats since Sept. 11, 2001, the federal government advised large water systems to implement sophisticated electronic sensors to guard against biological and chemical agents being introduced into community drinking water. Across the U.S., many large metropolitan areas have responded, including San Francisco, New York and Washington, D.C. However, these electronic devices can identify only the toxins they are programmed to target, and unidentified poisons can potentially evade detection.

To help alleviate this problem, scientists enlisted *Lepomis macrochirus*, commonly called bluegills, for a unique tour of duty. These panfish, highly sensitive to their environment, can detect up to 30 toxins including pesticides, mercury, cyanide and diesel fuel — making them a highly reliable early-warning system.

Rather than monitor the water, computers manufactured and distributed by the Southern California-based Intelligent Automation Corporation, detect even the slightest variations in the bluegills' vital signs.

In San Francisco, the bluegills are kept in tanks regularly replenished with municipal water. Sensors in each tank continually monitor their heartbeat, breathing and swimming patterns. When exposed to even minute levels of any toxin, they tend to become hyperactive and flare their gills.

If this situation is detected, the software immediately generates an e-mail warning to a command center, where control measures can be put into place. —

Don Vachini □

Klamath's Forgotten Rainbows

Long noted as a productive fall and winter salmon, or steelhead, destination, the upper reaches of the Klamath River see a dramatic drop in angling pressure during June, July and August. However, these "off" months offer some incredible opportunities for anglers seeking round native rainbow trout.

Originating from southern Oregon's Klamath Lake, the Klamath eventually enters the Golden State, flows through both Copco Lake and Iron Gate Reservoir and then free-flows 190 miles in a southwesterly direction to enter the Pacific Ocean.

Supporting a fantastic anadromous winter fishery, the 10-mile stretch of the Klamath River from Iron Gate Dam downstream to the Interstate 5 Bridge offers a little-known but quali-

ty rainbow trout fishery beginning in June. With cold flows from beneath the dam and a healthy aquatic training table, conditions are perfect for these non-seagoing residents that routinely range in the 14- to 18-inch category, with a few approaching 22 inches and pushing 4 to 5 pounds.

Often coinciding with the prolific salmonfly hatches that typically occur from mid- to late June, the 'bows go on unbelievable feeding binges, often attacking anything that hits the water. Most anglers prefer to drift the river, since shore access is limited.

Fly-tossers should come prepared with a matching 4- to 5-weight fly rod equipped with floating line and a 6X tippet to work size 8 to 10 yellow or brown Salmonfly, Stimulator, Brown and Blue Duns or Beadhead Woolly Buggers in black and purple.

Bigger trout are often attracted by spin anglers towing deep-diving No. 50 copper, bronze or silver Hot Shot or Rebel Crawdad plugs among bot-

tom structure. Shallow-running Mini-Speed Trap, Rebel Wee-R, Bomber Fat Free Shad, Flat A and Excalibur Swim'n Image models worked with 6- to 8-pound, low-visibility mono are also effective.

One rainbow is the limit. A barbless-hook restriction is enforced.

Anglers seeking an even less-pressured native rainbow trout venue should head to the Upper Klamath River between Copco Reservoir and the Oregon border. Although a few walk-in possibilities exist, access to most of this upper stretch is difficult, and you'll need permission to enter.

Thanks to an incredible aquatic smorgasbord, prime water conditions and several spawning tributaries, 'bows in this 6-plus-mile sector consistently range between 15 and 19 inches, with some individuals to 24 inches.

Summer flows are regulated daily to meet power obligations in Oregon, so fishing the right time of day is critical. Early in the morning is best, but once flows start rising, fishing is off until late in the day when the flows drop.

Spin tackle is successful for flinging a variety of dark brown or black Panther Martin, bronze Vibrax and brown Rooster Tail spinners or brown Rapalas and red, brown or black Bingo Bug plugs deep. A few anglers find success drifting or bouncing half a night crawler along the bottom or through riffles and pools under a Corky or indicator.

An amazing plethora of insect life churns in its turbulent flows. Fly-anglers successfully probe the riffles and heads or tails of holes with sinking or sink-tip lines and 6-foot leaders. Highly popular and effective wet flies include size 8 to 12 Woolly Buggers, Crawdads and Leeches in black, olive, brown and purple shades. But weighted Hare's Ear, Prince, Bird's Nest, Copper John and Pheasant Tail nymphs in sizes 10 to 12 are also a good option when bounced along the bottom or allowed to tumble through eddies. A dropper setup with the surface fly as an indicator often proves to be a wise choice. Check regulations carefully before fishing on either section. —Don Vachini

Continued on page 56...

Salmon Ready To Graduate

Visitors to Petaluma's Casa Grande High School can see dozens of adult fall-run chinook salmon that have literally returned to school. And in June, they get to see a graduation of fish into San Francisco Bay.

Casa Grande operates the only on-campus fish hatchery in the contiguous U.S. Under this award-winning program founded by wildlife teacher Tom Furrer, students not only rear salmon and steelhead on site in the winter months, but conduct environmental lessons for local elementary schools and other interested agencies.

A quarter century ago, students formed the United Anglers of Casa Grande and set their sights on an ambitious plan to replenish the local Petaluma River watershed.

Adopting nearby Adobe Creek, they began the ongoing task of restoring it from a denuded, trash-filled channel to a viable, tree-enshrouded creek. With their habitat restored, salmon and steelhead use the tributary once again.

Fall-run salmon usually begin arriving in late November, while winter-run kings and steelhead commonly show by mid-February.

With permits obtained from the Department of Fish and Game, students rescue salmon trapped in small pools and ferry them to their state-of-the-art hatchery. The students are actively involved in removing eggs, fertilizing them with milt milked from the males and gauging their progress in incubators.

Upwards of 40,000 eggs are collected annually and processed in the facility's raceways.

Approximately 30,000 salmon fry survive and are marked with a dye injected into their anal and ventral fins to make them easily identifiable. Under the auspices of the DFG, they are released into San Francisco Bay in time for June graduation.

A testament to the students' dream, the largest runs of chinook salmon ever documented in the Petaluma water system have occurred in recent years. —Don Vachini

Bishop Area's 'Magnificent 7' Stillwater Fishery

Encompassing California's widest valley and two of its highest and wildest mountain ranges, the Bishop area offers a remarkable contrast in landscapes. But it's also a bona fide trout mecca.

Crowley, Convict, North, Sabrina and South lakes, plus Intake II and Pleasant Valley reservoirs, are bordered by alluvial fans, arid sage desert and guarded by granite edifices.

Their cold, nutrient-rich water injects them with a bountiful bio-mass. Further up the food chain, there are big, healthy trout.

Although dominated by rainbows, brown trout are well represented throughout. Here you'll find self-sustaining native populations, as well as generous infusions of hefty Department of Fish and Game stockers and Alpers trout — which are huge, hard-fighting, privately reared rainbows.

Further enhancing the area's diversity, brook and golden trout can be found in higher elevations. But each of these "magnificent seven" waters bisected by Highway 395 poses different challenges and conditions.

Many visitors use bait-and-wait tactics or cast a variety of lures from the bank. A light- to ultralight-action spinning rod and reel loaded with 4- to 6-pound-test mono is an ideal setup for the planted 'bows.

Cruising trout regularly fall for orange, rainbow or chartreuse PowerBait, Nitro Bait, marshmallow-salmon egg combinations and inflated night crawlers.

They'll also take Panther Martin, Vibrax or Rooster Tail spinners, as well as Thomas Buoyant, Kastmaster, Krocodile and Little Cleo spoons doused in Liquid Krill or other scents.

Anglers seeking to get away from crowded banks use a boat to follow deeper-dwelling trout. Explore specialized structure such as shoals, dropoffs or inlets and outlets.

Troll Rebel, Rapala or assorted swimbaits behind lead-core line or a

downrigger. These tactics take many trout while electronics help locate schooling fish and pinpoint their depths as well.

Motorized boats are not allowed on Pleasant Valley and Intake II reservoirs and North Lake.

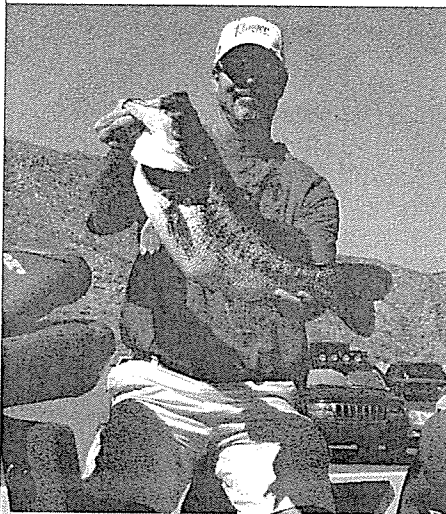
For fly-tossers, a full-sink line with a high-density tip matched to an 8- to 9-foot, 5- to 6-weight fly rod is ideal. Leaders should be 9-12 feet or longer as conditions dictate.

A No. 3 sink rating is recommended so that the fly gets down to fish fast, but slow enough to use a proper retrieve for nymphs.

Tan-brown Hare's Ear, Pheasant Tail, Beadhead, Chironomid, Elk Hair Caddis, Bird's Nest, Parachute Adams and orange-to-olive Scud patterns in sizes 12 to 20 are probably the best imitations of the plethora of smaller food forms available.

For imitating baitfish, meaty, size 8 to 12 streamers such as Matuka, Muddler Minnow, Damsel and Woolly Buggers in light-to-dark green and purple work best.

Boaters should be keenly aware of the winds, which notoriously pick up at any time. In just a few minutes, wind conditions can change from flat calm to 30 mph. Neoprene waders offer protection from frigid snowmelt in these waters. □



Mike Long of Poway broke a long-standing Diamond Lake record when he caught this 16.43-pound largemouth in the spring. He was using a 6-inch Rago Hard Real Trout when he hooked the lunker. Photo courtesy of Chris Shaffer.

Where Is The State's Best Perch Fishing?

Fishing success can never be guaranteed, but Iron Gate and Copco reservoirs probably come as close as possible. In fact, these reservoirs are among the greatest perch fisheries in the West — and are hard to beat for pure fishing fun!

Situated northeast of Yreka, these 2 man-made impoundments are formed by dams on the Klamath River. And since they are utilized for power production, they're kept at maximum capacity.

Each covers approximately 1,000 acres and is lined with tules, cattails and a few trees. But the weedlines surrounding their summer shorelines provide unbelievable food and protection for perch. Although both waters harbor rainbow trout and largemouth bass, they are absolutely loaded with yellow perch.

According to Larry Hanson, a DFG fisheries biologist in the Region I office, the barred perch multiply prolifically. He doesn't see any way their populations can be dented by fishing.

There is no limit, and Hansen encourages anglers to keep as many as they can clean and use.

"The population definitely needs to be thinned at both lakes," he said.

Since perch multiply like crazy and tend to stunt, most fish will be in the 6- to 8-inch range, with big specimens measuring 10 inches. For these tiny fighters, an ultra-light, 5-foot rod and reel loaded with 2-pound monofilament is more than a sporting outfit.

When fishing for perch, the possibilities are endless with plastics, tubes and curly-tailed jigs as well as red worms and mealworms under a bobber equally effective.

However, a more efficient method involves simply tying a 2-inch strand of brown or red yarn soaked in Pautzke's Liquid Krill to a size 10-12 hook.

Add a pair of BB split shot and jig vertically. The sturdy fiber eliminates the need to continually re-hook worms. □

By Don Vachini

Prime Time For Catching Kokes

Popular for their fighting when hooked, kokanee are also one of the finest-tasting freshwater fish.

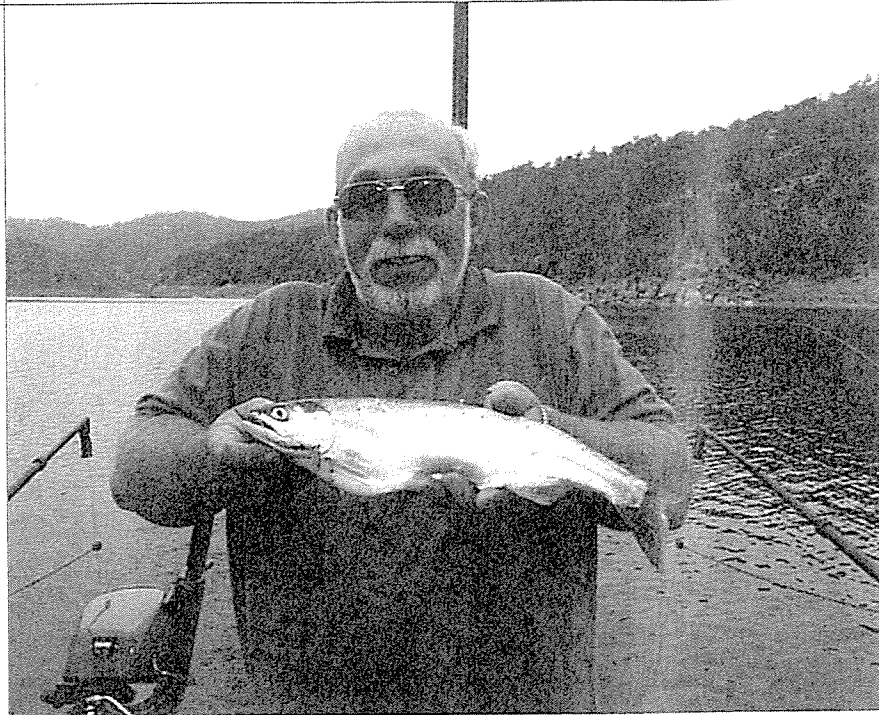
Currently there are populations in more than 25 lakes in Northern California. August is a prime time for anglers to begin to cash in on them.

Lake Tahoe, Whiskeytown, New Melones, Stampede, Indian Valley and Bullards Bar reservoirs routinely produce some of the largest kokes, which can potentially challenge the state record of 4 pounds, 13 ounces.

On a three-year cycle, their top fish will peak between 18 and 22 inches and push 3 to 4 pounds!

Berryessa, Pardee and Don Pedro lakes, plus Hell Hole Reservoir, round out some of the state's best spots. Other waters accounting for healthy but less notable salmon include Union Valley, Little Grass Valley, Scott's Flat, Pine Flat and San Luis reservoirs; and Bucks, Collins, Bowman, Donner, Fallen Leaf, Bass, Shaver and Huntington lakes.

These salmon feed on plankton and don't compete with trout for food. But to catch kokanee, you'll need specialized gear and tactics.



Fred Thomason caught this kokanee at New Melones Reservoir. August is a fine time to target these landlocked sockeyes. Photo by Chris Shaffer.

Their habits are just different enough to require some adjustments.

They prefer water temperatures in the 48 to 52 degree range. You'll find them to be a bit deeper than trout and are not as structure-oriented, often found in the middle of a lake. August fish cruise the thermocline between 60-110 feet and begin to school and station near tributary

streams in anticipation of spawning during October.

A boat is necessary to reach them and a downrigger is required to bring the offering deep enough. A good-quality depthfinder and flasher unit are also important accessories.

When you locate concentration via electronics, you'll need to draw the kokes' attention. Flashers on the downrigger and dodgers paired with bright, flashy lures, such as Ted Bug, Sockeye Slammer, Kok-a-Nut, French Ticklure, Kokanee King and Wedding Ring in pink, red, chartreuse, pearl, tiger and flaming orange shades, will often pique their interest.

The fish are easily attracted, but to provoke an actual commitment, you must add special temptation: Certainly the most mystifying is to imbibe a kernel of shoepeg corn on each hook. White is adequate, but red, green and blue-dyed kernels are highly productive, especially when soaked overnight in Pautzke Nectar, Liquid Krill, Crave Gravy or Nitro scents and liberally doused again just before trolling. □

By Don Vachini

Wild Browns In The Mountains

Five backcountry lakes tucked along Yosemite National Park's eastern boundary offer a scenic wild-trout bonanza. Carved by glaciers, guarded by snow-capped peaks, the Gaylor Basin is a one-mile hike from the Tioga Pass trailhead, about 13 miles from the town of Lee Vining via Highway 120.

The hike begins at 10,000 feet and climbs through pine forest to a saddle at 10,600 before dropping a few hundred feet into the drainage. There, anglers have access to the three Gaylor and two Granite lakes. Nearby, Ellery, Tioga and Saddlebag lakes, are reachable by car and noted for planted rainbows and browns.

But the Gaylor Basin provides a truly wild adventure. Aggressive brook trout usually range from 7 to 10 inches. Adequate spawning habitat maintains self-sustaining populations. Deeper middle sections, 20 to 30 feet, permit high winter survival. The lakes usually thaw during July. The short summer increases the char's metabolism. They feed heavily, routinely battling like fish twice their size.

Basin residents are especially active during low light — early morning and late afternoon — and also occur when there's a slight chop to the water. Find protected coves when afternoon winds buffet open water. □

IN THE FIELD

Calaveras County Trout Bounty

Calaveras County is gaining a reputation for some notable trout angling. Indeed, Indian summer is a prime time to sample its myriad wares, which include rainbow, brown and brook trout, plus kokanee salmon.

A multitude of trout waters such as Camanche, Pardee and Tulloch reservoirs and White Pines Lake are found within county borders. But a well-known reservoir and lengthy river system feeding it near Angel's Camp grab much of the notoriety.

Along the Highway 4 corridor, New Melones Reservoir is known for hefty rainbow and brown trout, plus spirited kokanee. Its primary feeder, the Stanislaus River, contains pan-size 'bows, browns and brookies as it tumbles through isolated stretches of Stanislaus National Forest.

Smaller creeks such as Beaver and Angel also afford steady action for wily, scaled-down trout.

A steep, canyon-type water not eas-

ily accessed by shore anglers, 12,500-acre New Melones is heavily stocked with California Department of Fish and Game rainbows and has plenty of healthy holdovers.

Tow size 4 dodgers in silver, brass or copper shades and trailing charrreuse or flaming orange-hued Needle Fish, Kastmasters, Crippures, Ted's Bugs, Apex or R-Lures on a 12- to 18-inch leader.

A scented night crawler in long, narrow loops behind a flasher usually proves to be a solid combination.

Guarded by giant sequoias, the North Fork Stanislaus in Calaveras Big Trees State Park can be a stimulating place to wet a line. Nearby, tributary Beaver Creek houses some secluded fall trout.

Red salmon eggs, worms and tiny spinners are effective on ultra-light rods. Fly anglers will find a 3- to 4-weight system perfect for tempting hungry residents with size 12 to 16 Prince, Copper John or Beadhead nymphs. For current angling information, lodging or guide services, call Glory Hole Sports at (209) 736-4333, or contact Calaveras Visitors Bureau at www.gocalaveras.com, or 1-800-225-3764. □

Klamath River Dams To Go?

The Klamath River was once the third most productive salmon river in the West. Over the past decade, its vaunted populations have dwindled significantly. To help it recover, a dozen recreational angling and conservation groups have urged removal of four dams near the California-Oregon state line. The plan could have significant implications for water use, energy and salmon.

At the heart of the movement is an application filed by PacifiCorp, a hydroelectric company, for renewal of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission permits for the dams.

The last permits were issued 50 years ago. Environmental protection is now a public concern. And to meet the current law's licensing requirements, renewal will be conditional on extensive mitigation measures.

In a landmark 2006 ruling, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Commerce jointly submitted fish passage prescriptions to the Commission for the relicensing of PacifiCorp's dams on the Klamath River.

PacifiCorp's license expired in March, and the dams are operating on annual extensions until there is a new agreement.

Many groups, including the Izaak Walton League, American Sportfishing Association, International Game Fish Association, and Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, are negotiating with PacifiCorp to decommission the outdated dams.

Most parties say the mandated upstream and downstream fish ways and ladders may prove too costly to implement. Dam removal may be the only economically feasible solution.

The rejuvenated flows could be a big step to restoring the ocean-going salmon populations to roughly 300 miles of additional watershed. □

By Don Vachini

Dove Season's September Start

The popular dove-hunting season will take place Sept. 1 through 15, and then again in mid-November.

As always, the big challenge for mourning dove hunters is finding public access. You could always deal with a farmer or landowner to gain access to private lands. But there are some notable public lands available. Solid public access areas include the Tehama, Upper Butte Basin, Gray Lodge, Yolo Basin, Los Banos, Mendota and Grasslands wildlife areas — as well as Bureau of Land Management land in the Susanville area, Grizzly Island, Hunter Liggett Military Base, Big Sandy Wildlife Area, Los Padres National Forest, Mojave Desert, San Bernardino National Forest and San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

Doves are very patterned birds. Every morning and evening, they take specific flights from their roost to food and then water, and back to roost.

You'll need a 2007 California hunting license in addition to the Upland Game Stamp. Make sure you fill out the Harvest Information Program (HIP) survey and attach the free sticker to your license.

Junior license holders are not required to purchase the Upland Game Bird Stamp, but must have a HIP stamp.

In addition to spotted and ringed turtle-doves, Eurasian collared doves are also considered part of the daily bag and possession limit.

White-winged doves can be taken only in San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial counties from September 1 through 15.

Statewide shooting hours remain from half an hour before sunrise to sunset. Before heading out, be sure to check regulations thoroughly.

(Editor's Note: See our story about dove hunting in Imperial County on Page 24.) □

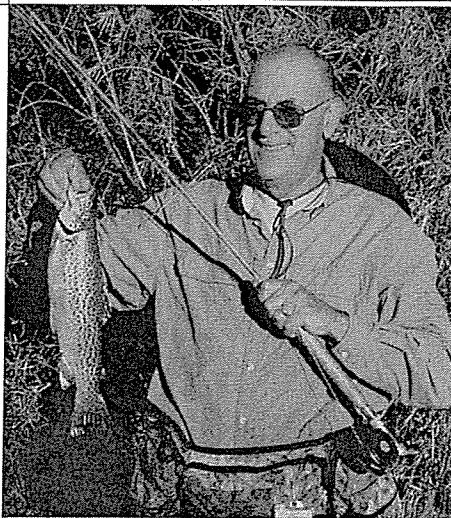
Brown Trout Boost In Bridgeport

A quartet of waters within a 10-mile radius of Bridgeport is renowned for producing some world-class brown trout. These resident game fish routinely approach double-digit weight, and some top out near 30 pounds!

The current and previous state-record browns both came from Twin Lakes. Bridgeport Reservoir has also produced a state-record specimen, and the East Walker has yielded line-and-tippet-class world records.

But over the past decade, these notable waters have suffered drastic drawdowns, drought and loss of spawning habitat. The fisheries have dwindled in both size and numbers.

A local project aims to rejuvenate the storied brown trout long associated with this area. The Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce and the local angling community are part of a grassroots fish-enhancement program that serves as a model for other communities that depend on visiting anglers' revenue. The Paradise Shores Trout Project is funded entirely by private donations and fundrais-



The Brown Trout Enhancement Plan hopes to rejuvenate Bridgeport's storied brown trout history. Author Don Vachini admires a tippet-class record from the East Walker River. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

ing events like tournaments.

The committee behind this program decided against buying the catchable-size, hatchery-grown trout commonly stocked in numerous state lakes and reservoirs, choosing instead to grow their own brown trout from eggs or fingerlings, in what they call a "clean, disease-free, low-density environment" — in modified metal tomato bins with re-circulating

well water.

In the spring of 2006, they purchased 15,000 fingerling browns, raised them and released as sub-catchables during October. The fish showed remarkable growth rates. In three months, many more than doubled their weight.

A second tomato-bin facility, situated on Virginia Creek and operated by Jim and Brinn Little of the Virginia Creek Settlement, went into operation this past spring.

According to Little, future plans call for an annual release of 50,000 browns into local waters such as Bridgeport Reservoir, Green, Buckeye and Robinson creeks, plus the East Walker River. □

Quagga Quest

You've probably heard that the invasive quagga mussel was discovered in lakes Mead, Mohave and Havasu on the lower Colorado River.

Ranging from microscopic to the size of a fingernail, these prolific feeders can alter an entire ecosystem. They consume food sources of native species, accumulate pollutants, while clogging intakes as they attach themselves to any hard surface.

Since boats are the primary transporters of these mussels, boaters should take the following steps to inhibit their spread:

- Wash off the hull of each watercraft once it is out of the water.
- Remove plants and animal material.
- Drain water through the vessel's hull plug and thoroughly dry the area.
- Make sure that the vessel's lower outboard unit is drained and dry.
- Clean and dry any livewell aboard the vessel.
- Empty and dry any buckets.
- Dispose of all bait on dry land.
- If you're removing your craft from the Colorado River system, make sure it dries out and remains out of water for five days.

If you have any questions, call toll-free 1-866-440-9530 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. □

By Don Vachini

Pikes' Days Numbered at Davis Lake

This fall, the Department of Fish and Game plans to begin eradicating the predatory, non-native northern pike at Lake Davis.

Pike are an invasive species that has devastated the local fishery, with a subsequent negative impact on the local economy since 1999. That's the year they reappeared after a controversial and unsuccessful eradication project in 1997. Despite control and containment efforts since 2000, their population continues to grow at this Plumas County reservoir, increasing the threat of an escape that could cause irreversible ecological and economic harm to other areas of the state, including the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

This project culminates nearly eight years of working in partnership with the local community, the Lake Davis Steering Committee and other government officials to examine every possible option for tackling the Lake Davis pike problem.

Officials plan to treat the impoundment with CFT Legumine, a new liquid formulation of rotenone, which doesn't contain piperonyl butoxide. The piscicide will be applied to the reservoir at a volume between approximately 45,000 to 48,000 acre-feet, levels believed to incur the fewest environmental — and associated recreational and economic — impacts on the local community.

To implement the project, the DFG will seek approximately \$12 million in Ecosystem Restoration Program funding from CalFED. Additional information is available at the DFG's Web site, www.dfg.ca.gov. □

Mad River Anglers Happy

Once again, steelhead anglers along the Mad River have reason to celebrate. Struck from the state budget three years ago, funding for the Mad River Fish Hatchery dried up. But community volunteers kept it alive, operating at half capacity. Volunteers raised and planted more than 250,000 yearling steelhead each year.

That translates to about 3,000 to 6,000 returning adults. Most range in the 12- to 15-pound category, but individual fish will approach 20 pounds.

If you're going to fish here, know that successful anglers often locate Mad River steelies near river bottom

behind large boulders, logs or along protected ledges. Most productive is the eight-mile stretch between the Highway 299 bridge and the hatchery. When the river's muddy, work the margins between fast water and soft water with noisy Spin-N-Glos, Swiss Blinks and Vibrax spinners in flaming orange or chartreuse.

When clarity improves, try a dime-sized egg cluster paired with a Corky or cheater in pink, red or orange and a slinky, bounced deep through holding structure.

Check current regulations first. This water requires barbless hooks. Bag limit is two hatchery fish (fins clipped). You'll need a valid fishing license, plus a steelhead report card.

For current fishing information, contact Bucksport Sporting Goods in

Eureka at (707) 442-1832. Check out the Assembly Bill 7 funding plan at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/docs/AB7ImplementationPlan.pdf>. □

Quail Season Looking Better

Generally favorable weather conditions produced good quail hatches, which could mean a strong season into December.

Despite a rather mild winter, which kept temperatures on the cooler side, adequate vegetation created abundant feed and cover opportunities for the state bird. Additionally, DFG records indicate a fairly high carryover from last year's banner crop.

During November and December, hunters could expect to locate coveys averaging between 40 and 50 birds.

Since rainfall totals were much lower than usual, southlanders may see lower numbers this year.

The DFG recommends visiting public lands around Lake Isabella, The Kern River, Pinyon Mountains, Kelso Peak, Camp Pendleton Marine Base and the Cleveland National Forest or the Piute Range, Providence Mountains, Black Canyon and the Opal Mountains on the desert side.

Temperatures stayed cooler later into the spring, and carryover appears good in the central region of the state. Focus attention near brushy streams, which provide both water and cover.

The Oroville Wildlife Area, Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area and the Plumas and Tahoe national forests are prime starting points.

In the northwest part of the state, hopes are high because good populations are present. The best areas to center on are Yolla Bolly Area, King Range National Conservation Area and Clear Lake.

Northeastern hotspots appear to be Modoc and Lassen counties, with the Susanville area at the top of the list. The Fort Sage Mountains, Honey Lake Wildlife Area and the Skedaddle Mountains are usually productive. □

By Don Vachini

Trophy Browns On Tap For Diamond Valley

The California Department of Fish and Game announced that it stocked brown trout in giant Diamond Valley Lake near the city of Hemet.

A plant of brown trout, the first of a number, took place in October 2006. About 20,000 sub-catchables were poured in the reservoir.

This action is intended to establish a trophy brown trout fishery in a lake that already has trophy rainbow trout, largemouth bass and a burgeoning striped bass fishery.

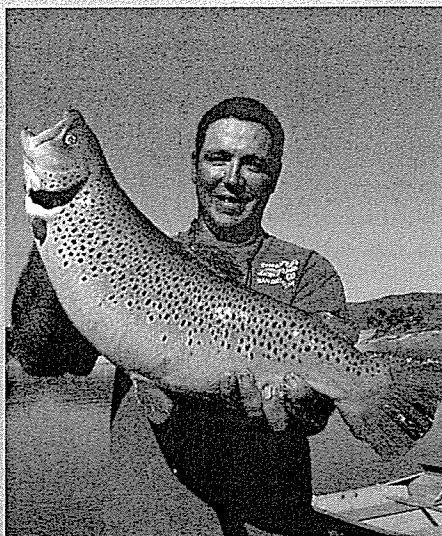
Unlike rainbow trout — according to DFG biologist Mike Giusti — brown trout in a hatchery don't grow uniformly. Sizes will vary among individual trout of the same age.

"Since we are trying to build a trophy fishery," Giusti said, "the original plan was to plant 50,000 sub-catchable browns every third year.

"We won't plant every year to provide lots of browns, just enough to create some very big brown trout."

Because some of the allotted 50,000 trout were used for another project last year, the DFG will probably have stocked an additional 25,000 by the end of 2007. Then it will stock every third year.

"It's going to take a couple of years until you start to see 2- and 3-pound specimens," says Giusti. "But we've such a huge forage base of shad and silversides at Diamond Valley that the browns should do very well." □



Could Diamond Valley Lake anglers expect to catch big browns like this 13-pounder in the future? Photo courtesy of Cal Kellogg.

Bay Area Lakes Get Holiday Trout Stocking

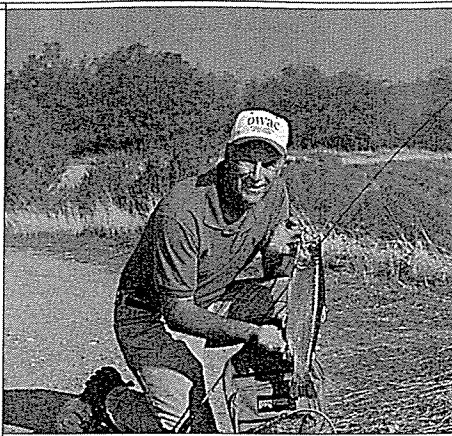
Just in time for the holidays, several San Francisco Bay-area lakes will benefit from extra trout plants and bigger fish. These additional plants will begin in the last two weeks of December.

Since 1995, the Fishing in the City Program has improved fishing close to where people live and work. This operation is the largest program of its kind in the country, serving eight California regions and expanding to serve rural areas.

"We'll stock local lakes with something anglers will enjoy — larger fish and more of them," said Ethan Rotman, coordinator of DFG's Fishing in the City Program in the Bay Area. "We urge anglers of all skill levels to fish during the holiday season."

Funding for the Fishing in the City program comes through the Sportfish Restoration Fund, a federal tax on fishing tackle and boat fuel.

This windfall enables the DFG to plant an additional 11,500 pounds of rainbow trout in select Bay Area lakes. The plants, ranging from 1 to 3 pounds each, are synchronized to coincide with holiday family-oriented events, and are in addition to regular DFG stocking from the department or the



Lake Chabot will be one of several Bay Area lakes to get a healthy plant of rainbows. Don Vachini caught this 4-pound holdover there. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

local park agencies.

In the San Francisco, Marin, and Sonoma county areas, the DFG will plant 1-pound trout in Lake Chabot, Scottsdale Pond (Novato), South Lake Merced (San Francisco) and Bon Tempe Reservoir (Fairfax). Lake Ralphine (Santa Rosa) will receive 1- to 3-pound trout. In the East Bay, Hidden Valley Lakes in Martinez, Lake Refugio (Hercules), Shadow Cliffs Reservoir (Livermore), Lake Elizabeth (Fremont) and Lakeshore Park and Quarry Lakes (both Newark) will receive 1-pound trout.

South Bay waters Cottonwood Lake (San Jose), Spring Valley Lake (Milpitas) and Lake Vasona (Los

Gatos) will be infused with 1- to 3-pounders, while Lake Cunningham (San Jose) will receive 1-pound trout.

"The strength of the program lies in its ability to build partnerships with local communities," Rotman said.

"The department works with local schools, service clubs, park agencies, lake managers and just about anyone else interested in kids, fishing and clean water."

For information on where to fish, and upcoming learn-to-fish programs, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/oceo/fishcity, or call (415) 892-0460. □

Battle Creek Targeted For Sea-Run Species

In northern California's Battle Creek, endangered and threatened chinook salmon and steelhead are benefiting from a \$67 million restoration program — the single largest restoration effort funded by the DFG.

Diversion dams erected during the early 1900s kept migrating salmonids from accessing their spawning habitat. With a relatively high, stable flow of cold water throughout the year, the drought-resistant habitat gives an unparalleled opportunity to recover three new independent populations of threatened and endangered chinook and steelhead.

Battle Creek could be the new home to three new independent populations of threatened and endangered chinook and steelhead.

Now, after nearly 100 years of blockage and human manipulation, the Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project will remove several hydroelectric diversion dams, as well as increase water flow, restore anadromous habitat and create fish passages. For more information about the project, visit the Battle Creek Conservancy's Web site, www.battle-creek.net. □

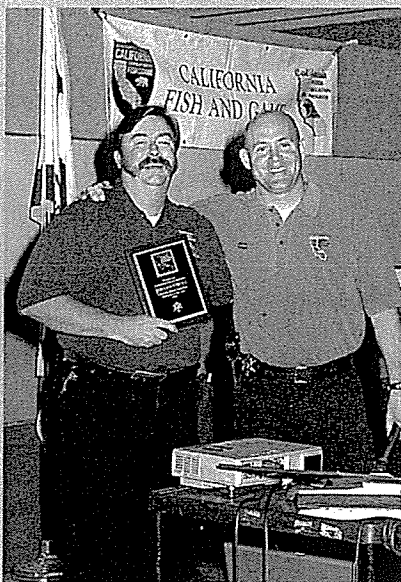
By Don Vachini

Goodman Is Top Hunter Teacher

Jim Goodman was recently selected as the 2006 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year. He was nominated by his peers and selected out of a field of 720 statewide hunter education instructors.

Goodman teaches hunter-education courses at Northbay Firearms in Sonoma County, the Santa Rosa Parks and Recreation Department and recruits and mentors new instructors.

Last year, he helped teach two hunter-education classes at the Fish and Game Academy for warden cadets, a class for members of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department SWAT team and Advanced Hunter Education Hunting Clinics. □



"Wa
 wa
 NE
 Hill's®
 fat an
 "Anyone
 It takes
 Besides
 and cho
 year aft
 Superio

IN THE FIELD

Steelhead Cards Due By Jan. 31

Steelhead anglers planning to usher in the New Year on-stream — legally — will need a valid 2008 California Fishing License, available at venues statewide.

In fact, anyone 16 years of age or older, pursuing fish of any type, must possess a current license. While fishing, you must have it plainly displayed on your outer clothing, at or above your waist.

Check locally to see if any additional stamps or cards — such as Ocean or Bay/Delta enhancement stamps or Salmon Punch Cards — are required.

In addition to a 2008 Steelhead Fishing Report Card, anglers who pursue steelhead statewide are reminded that their 2007 cards are due by Jan. 31. The mandatory return requirement is intended to provide the DFG with sufficient data to monitor and manage California's steelhead populations.

"Their information is critical to maintaining and improving healthy

and fishable steelhead populations," said Terry Jackson, coordinator of the Steelhead Report Card Program.

"Our goal is to improve California steelhead habitat and populations — and to increase steelhead fishing opportunities and success."

This requires accurate and complete data from anglers, he said.

Read your cards carefully, and complete the information as accurately as you can.

The green Steelhead Card is a fishing report, not just a catch report. You must record where and when you fished, even if you caught no fish on a given trip. Those who did not fish for steelhead in 2007 are asked to write, "Did not fish" on the card. All cards must be returned, regardless of the number of trips you take.

Steelhead Report Cards should be mailed to the Department of Fish and Game; Steelhead Fishing Report-Restoration Card; P.O. Box 944209; Sacramento, CA 94244-2090.

You can also drop them off at any DFG office. □

Frozen North State Lakes Have Hot Trout Bites

Gripped in ice and snow, several Northern California destinations between Lake Tahoe and Mount Shasta are rapidly gaining renown for their ice-fishing.

Ranking high in accessibility and productivity, Castle, Davis, Silver, Red and Caples lakes, plus Boca, Prosser and Stampede reservoirs, routinely reward adventurous anglers with rainbow, brook, brown and cutthroats up to 14 inches, with occasional trout ranging to 18 inches.

Ice-fishing is much easier than you might expect, especially because it doesn't require fine skill or high-end tackle. An ice auger and shovel, combined with conventional trout tackle, are all you really need to begin.

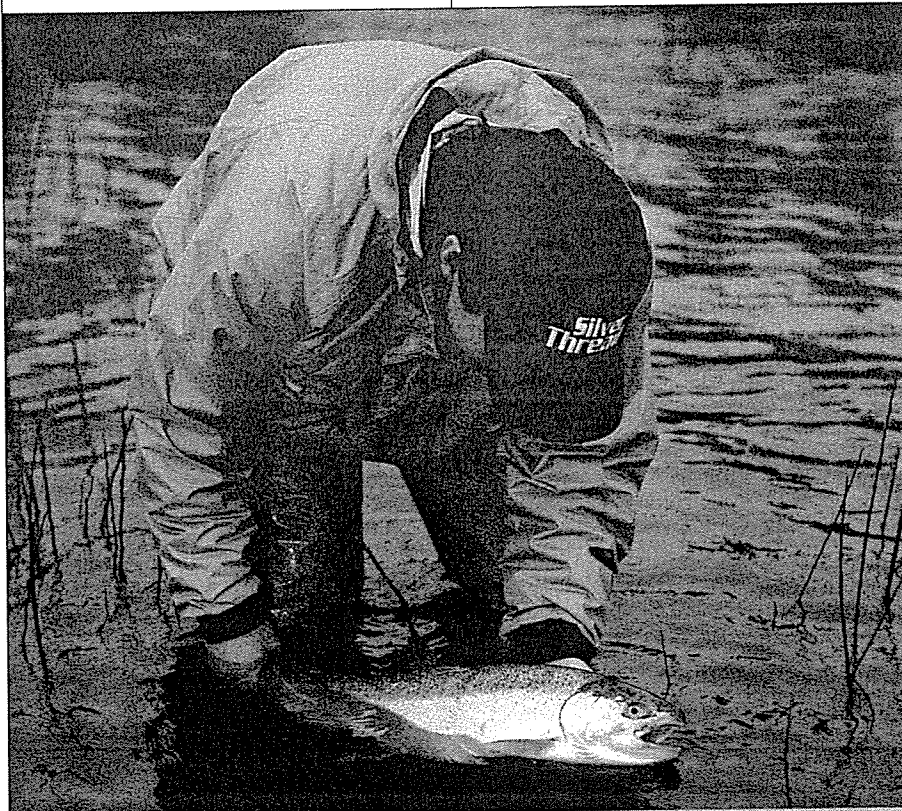
To get an idea of how deep you are, drill your first hole near shore.

Ideally, you'll want to be 10 feet or deeper. Once you find the right depth, drill several holes to allow more light to penetrate and allow the water to warm a bit. Most productive locales occur along shore, and not in the middle of the lake.

While some waters can be reached by a 4WD, others require a short hike or a snowmobile. Never compromise on safety when considering a trip to any of these frozen lakes. Wear warm waterproof clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen and gloves. And always fish with a partner. Since ice can be unpredictable, reliable rules of thumb include seeking the most recent reports and avoiding "blue ice."

You can check up-to-the-minute conditions by calling The Tackle Shop in Yreka at (530) 841-1901 for Castle Lake; Dollard's Market in Portola at (530) 832-5351 for Lake Davis; Mountain Hardware in Truckee (530) 587-4844 for Boca, Prosser and Stampede reservoirs and The Sportsman in South Lake Tahoe (530) 542-3474 for Red, Silver and Caples lakes. □

By Don Vachini



Steelhead Fishing Report Cards help the Department of Fish and Game monitor and manage California's steelhead populations. Photo by Ron Sinfelt.

IN THE FIELD

... Continued from page 12

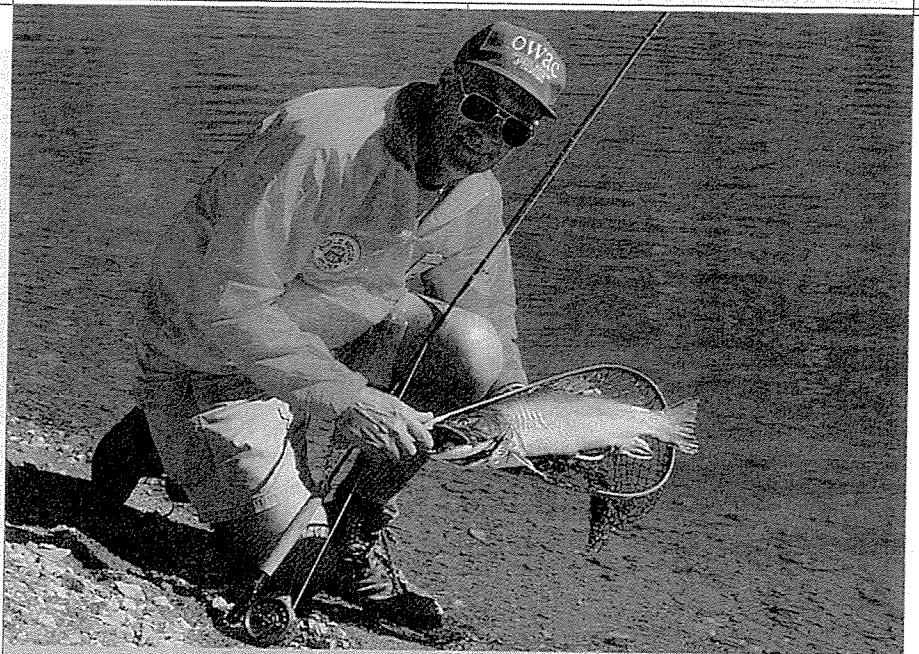
Hall Of Fame Tempts Anglers In California

As the keeper of freshwater sport-fishing world records, the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame offers anglers numerous opportunities to get their name into the record book. Of the nearly 200 species recognized, 45 are found in Golden State waters.

According to Emmett Brown Jr., executive director, the group actually recognizes multiple categories of world records: "In addition to the All-Tackle world mark, which is for the biggest fish of a particular species, there are Kept-Fish and Catch-and-Release sections."

Within each of those categories, Fly Fishing, Rod-Reel, Pole-Line-No Reel and Ice Fishing divisions bring the total to nine.

The HOF sanctions global standards and archives them at their on-site



Author Don Vachini cradles a 4-pound, 2-ounce brook trout that claims the Unlimited Tippet Class Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame record. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

Hayward, Wis. headquarters, their records are also documented in the *Fresh Water Angling Records* book, published annually. For those intent on

attaining global notoriety, Brown suggests perusing the current record book, then targeting a species with either small weights or sizes holding down a position or, in some cases, a vacancy.

By selecting a species with beatable dimensions or vacancies in a particular line or tippet class, your choice is narrowed considerably, and the odds for a record increase.

To fill a Kept vacancy, the fish need weigh a minimum of only 1 pound, while the Catch-and-Release qualifier is measured in inches.

Since the Catch-and-Release category is relatively new, encouraging in-water measurements, a photo, minimal handling and swift release, it probably offers the most realistic chances at entering the book.

"Its less-stringent handling requirements place less stress on the fish," Brown said, "and offers it a better chance of survival."

To be considered, all catches must be in compliance with rules and regulations established by the HOF.

For a list of available species, guidelines and application forms contact the HOF at 10360 Hall of Fame Drive; Hayward, WI 54843.

Call (715) 634-4440 or pull up www.freshwater-fishing.org.—Don Vachini □

Fewer Ducks In California?

The Department of Fish and Game has completed its 2007 breeding pair survey. Results indicate that during the past year, duck species have decreased slightly. The breeding population of mallards decreased 3 percent from 399,400 in 2006 to 388,300 in 2007. Total ducks (all species combined) decreased from 649,300 to 627,600, also a 3 percent decrease.

These estimates are not statistically different from the previous years' estimates or the long-term averages, though mallards, the most abundant ducks in the survey, are 4 percent above the long-term average.

"The proportion of young ducks in the harvest last year was lower than average, despite the wet spring nesting conditions in 2006. So we didn't expect to see an increase in the breeding population estimate this year," said Melanie Weaver, one of the DFG biologists who conduct the survey.

DFG biologists and warden pilots have conducted this survey using fixed-wing aircraft since 1955. The California Waterfowl Association assists the DFG by surveying a portion of transects using a helicopter.

The population estimates are for the surveyed areas only, but those areas include the majority of the suitable duck-nesting habitat in the state, including wetland and agricultural areas in northeastern California, the Central Valley from Red Bluff to Bakersfield, the Suisun Marsh, and some coastal valleys.

The DFG is awaiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's breeding population estimates from the primary waterfowl breeding areas — namely, Alaska, north-central United States and Canada. Most of California's wintering duck population originates from the federally surveyed areas. Preliminary indications are that habitat in many prairie nesting areas is above average. —Don Vachini □

State Reprints Biodiversity Atlas

A popular guide to the Golden State's plant and animal life is once again available.

California's landscape, size, topography, climate and diverse habitats are unparalleled. The state is home to more than 580 bird species, 200 species of mammals, 130 reptile and amphibian species, 60 freshwater fish species, and 5,000 species of native plants (the highest number in the nation), many of which are found only in California.

The Atlas of the Biodiversity of California, authored by Department

of Fish and Game natural resource scientists, was so popular that the first 5,000 books sold out and a second printing was required.

First published in 2003, the 112-page bound collection contains full-color maps, photographs and written accounts of the state's diverse wildlife species and habitats. The atlas explores the state's remarkable geography, depicts how biodiversity is measured, and provides samples of the complexity and unique qualities of many California habitats.

Illustrations by artist Dugald Stermer are featured in this user-friendly, educational tool.

Geographic Information System technology was used extensively to

create maps that illustrate the vibrancy and rarity of the state's flora and fauna, from Del Norte salamanders in the wet climates of the Klamath basin to steelhead trout in the temperate Central Valley to desert tortoises in the arid Mojave region.

You can purchase it for \$20 online at atlas.dfg.ca.gov. □

Teen Shoots For Olympic Dream

A young trapshooter from Los Angeles, Calif., is now one step closer to his Olympic dreams.

Daniel Tate, 16, was one of the top talents in NSSF's Scholastic Clay Target Program, a national youth shooting league with nearly 10,000 students competing in 2007.

With the 2008 Games in Beijing only a few months away, Tate is feeling the excitement.

"Ever since I was little, I've always wanted to shoot in the Olympics. I've been listening and absorbing as much as I can."

Since its inception eight years ago, youth participation in trap, skeet and sporting clays has increased nearly 20 percent.

Olympic shooting includes rifle, pistol and shotgun events. Tate honed his skills in the difficult and challenging international style of trapshooting with U.S. Olympic shotgun coach Lloyd Woodhouse and his staff.

At the camp, daily training for sport shooters starts early and goes late. Skeet and trapshooters split into separate groups to work with coaches who specialize in those sports.

Various drills help shooters fine-tune skills and, at the same time, he coaches identify athletes with special aptitude as well as attitude.

For more information, visit www.nssf.org. □

By Don Vachini

Better Roads Equal More Chinook?

Along with overfishing, logging and streambed degradation, endangered chinook salmon and steelhead often face impassible man-made barriers in their efforts to reach their historic spawning sites.

However, help is on the way — thanks to a Northern California agency that is utilizing public roads as an avenue to reverse the decline of these game fish.

According to Greg Bryant, a recovery coordinator for the National Marine Fisheries Service, the federal government is closely watching the efforts of road crews as they manage 4,700 miles of public roads in Mendocino, Siskiyou, Trinity, Del Norte and Humboldt counties in an effort to restore, improve and protect Coastal Mountain salmonid habitat.

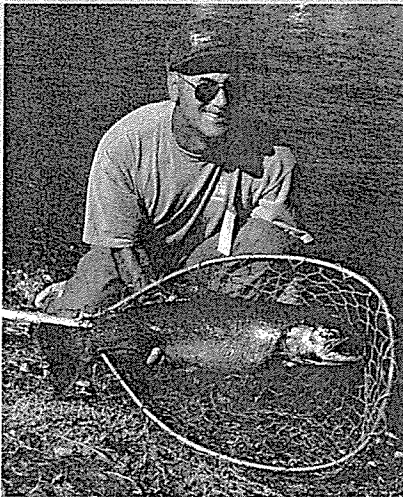
In response to concerns about the Endangered Species Act and water-quality regulations, local authorities have been removing culverts that in past years have blocked salmon, steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout from reaching tributaries.

"The road manual they developed encourages authorities to replace impassible barriers with fish-friendly culverts or bridges and to open up closed off headwater streams where fish can spawn," said Bryant.

Benefiting from a cooperative effort between local, state and federal agencies, the plan also outlines measures for habitat improvement and offers guidelines to help maintenance workers keep tons of sediment out of Smith, Klamath, Scott, Salmon, Trinity, Mad, Eel and Van Duzen river drainages.

Despite tapering runs, Mark Lancaster, director of the Five Counties Salmonid Restoration Program, believes that most native salmonids are very resilient.

Simply by generating areas accessible to spawning, the fish usually need only the smallest window to maintain their numbers, he said. □



Author Don Vachini holds a 10-pound chinook. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

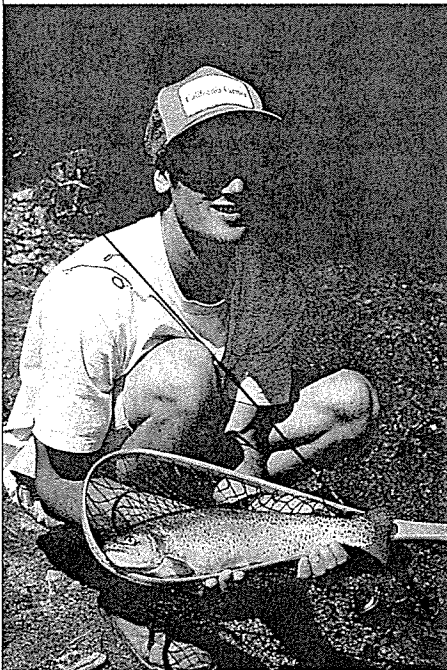
IN THE FIELD

Better Summer Fishing To Come In Crystal Basin

Sitting in the El Dorado National Forest west of Lake Tahoe, the Crystal Basin Recreation Area remains one of the Sierra Nevada's most popular recreation areas, receiving more than a million visitors a year.

Still, this remains a pristine outdoor mecca. Named for a nearby ridge that resembles frozen ice crystals, it lies adjacent to the Desolation Wilderness. Loon Lake, along with Ice House and Union Valley reservoirs, are prime drive-to waters. But with a little hiking, you can access eight other destinations.

Department of Fish and Game-stocked rainbow trout are abundant and available to patient shore-anglers who fling assorted lures, soak worms or toss putty baits. Boaters dredge the depths, towing shiny plugs behind dodgers and flashers for reclusive brown, mackinaw and kokanee salmon. Hikers get away from crowds to pursue brook trout with ultralight tackle in the nearby backcountry.



Jason Vachini admires a 3-pound holdover rainbow trout taken from Loon Lake. Improved water conditions will benefit future anglers at Crystal Basin. Photo by Don Vachini.

The area is susceptible to overcrowding during summer, but fishermen, campers and boaters will soon see improved conditions. Under an agreement between land-use agencies and power providers, water levels will be left higher in streams, rivers and lakes in the basin. That should help fishermen, boaters and whitewater rafters, along with fish and wildlife. Physical improvements include better camping and boating facilities plus more hiking trails.

These projects are part of a pact between the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, PG&E, fishing and boating organizations, whitewater rafters, environmental groups and government agencies, including the

Forest Service and state and federal fish and wildlife departments.

Water levels will be increased this year. Campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, roads and trail systems will be improved over the next 20 years under the agreement.

The Sacramento utilities district is making the improvements as a condition for continuing to use public land to generate hydroelectricity under a pending 50-year license with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The Sacramento-based, 688-megawatt hydroelectric system currently generates enough power for about 180,000 homes. □

By Don Vachini

Packing Out Everything

The removal of the highest outhouse in the continental U.S. signaled the beginning of a new wilderness ethic.

The privy atop 14,494-foot Mount Whitney and two others along the summit trail were recently removed because high-altitude sanitation was becoming hazardous.

Helicopters had to make regular flights up the steep-walled canyons in treacherous winds, while rangers in HAZMAT suits tied 250-pound bags and barrels of waste onto a long line dangling below the craft.

Under a new innovative strategy, wilderness visitors are now given personal waste bags. The 19,000 or so hikers who pick up Forest Service permits each year to hike the Whitney Trail are issued double-sealed sanitation kits and told how to use them — just as they are told how to keep their food away from bears and how to find shelter when thunderstorms rake the ridges with lightning.

The most popular kit model, known as a WAGbag (short for *Waste Alleviated and Gelling*), is becoming a fixture on the outside of hikers' backpacks. Manufactured by Phillips Environmental Products in Montana, the bags have been adopted by the Pentagon and agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Actually two separate plastic bags, the inner one is a funnel-like receptacle with powder at the bottom. Adding a bit of water causes the powder to gel, encapsulating anything inside.

Whitney backpackers are accepting the new policy, said Garry Oye, the Inyo National Forest district ranger who put this pack-it-out regimen in place.

"The bags' appearance in Sequoia National Park, Inyo National Forest and throughout the John Muir Wilderness is one more indication that park stewards want visitors to take responsibility for themselves."

Hikers on the Mount Whitney trail have willingly shouldered the burden of the new sanitation standard.

So far, more than 4,500 pounds of used WAGbags have been deposited in receptacles at the Whitney Portal trailhead, all of it headed for landfills, where the bags are designed to biodegrade over six to nine months.

In the future, the backcountry hiker's motto will most certainly be, "You can't take it with you. In fact, you must!" □

Streamsides Get A Helping Hand

The Department of Fish and Game recently launched the Agricultural Riparian Buffers Initiative, a new program designed to help rebuild Central Valley streamside habitat.

The plan is to restore and manage riparian habitat critical to California's wildlife on properties along the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and their major tributaries.

"Nearly all the Central Valley's

historic riparian habitat has been lost, devastating many wildlife populations," said Marc Kenyon, California Landowner Incentive Program coordinator. He said that properly functioning riparian habitats can benefit farmers, ranchers and the public by protecting stream banks and improving water quality.

The DFG has partnered with Ducks Unlimited to expand the suc-

cessful California Landowner Incentive Program, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiative that awards grants to pay for land-management activities designed to benefit California's declining plant and animal species.

More than 225 species depend on this type of habitat, including 42 at-risk species in the Central Valley.

The new program will make it easy for participating private landowners to restore and manage riparian buffers, strips of densely vegetated land near streams and rivers. Unlike previous programs that required private monies, the DFG will administer grant funds to pay the full cost of restoring the habitat and provide added incentives to offset costs of idling farmland for the next 10 years.

Landowners also will receive technical assistance from experienced biologists to help establish riparian vegetation.

Ideal projects will take small amounts of marginal orchards and cropland out of production and restore the land to riparian habitat. These buffer strips, 50 to 200 feet wide, will provide vital wildlife habitat and capture excess runoff of sediments, nutrients and fertilizers before it reaches waterways.

The DFG hopes to connect existing remnant patches of habitat.

Species like the yellow-billed cuckoo, Swainson's hawk and valley elderberry longhorn beetle depend on riparian habitat for year-round activities such as feeding, molting, migrating, nesting and rearing young, Kenyon said. "Connecting habitat fragments will allow these species to expand their ranges and ultimately increase in numbers."

The plan stipulates that habitat restoration should focus on California's privately owned lands.

"With the help of private landowners, we should be able to realize substantial increases in the populations of at-risk species," Kenyon said. □

By Don Vachini

Bishop Brings In Alpers' Trout

The community of Bishop, known for its abundance of cold snow-fed waters and craggy sentinels, relies heavily on its renowned trout fishing for much of its income.

In order to help maintain its angling-mecca status and keep attracting visitors, local merchants have aided with supplemental trout plants for more than a decade, augmenting the DFG's heavy stocking schedule.

Adopt-A-Creek is once again ready to help enhance local waters. Now entering its 12th season, the group prides itself on picking up where the DFG leaves off, planting additional trout in the Bishop Creek drainage.

The DFG plants tens of thousands of 10- to 13-inch rainbows with occasional 1- to 3-pound surplus brood fish as part of its annual regimen. Each season, tons of "bonus" rainbows are also infused, primarily along the Highway 168 corridor, according to Adopt-A-Creek president Ron Scira.

"With each load totaling about 200 pounds of trout, 27 scheduled deliveries take place from the end of April through the end of October," he said.

The organization doesn't skimp on trout size, either. It buys fish from Mono County trout rancher Tim Alpers, whose product has earned a reputation for both size and pugnacity among locals and visitors alike. The group deposits trout in various roadside hotspots, mostly along Bishop Creek's North and South forks, North Lake and Intake II Reservoir.

The approximately \$14,000 per season needed to keep this program afloat comes from the group's main corporate sponsors — Upper Deck Company/Richard McWilliams, Union Bank in Bishop and Bishop's Paiute Palace Casino — with merchants and private donations covering the rest of the needed funding.

For more information, contact the Bishop Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau (760) 873-8405, or at www.bishopvisitor.com. □



Bishop waters are filled with trout, thanks to supplemental trout plants from Adopt-A-Creek. Photo by Don Vachini.

... Continued from page 12

His Goal Is 1,000 Species of Fish

One California fisherman has taken species hunting to what seems like a new level.

Steve Wozniak of San Ramon is well over halfway to accomplishing his lifetime goal of catching 1,000 different species of fish.

His quest began as a friendly contest between a couple of friends to catch the most species by hook and line. As part of their rules, any fish of any size counted toward the total.

In Wozniak's own words, the contest soon went, "too far," and he began focusing on gathering as many diverse types as he could in many different countries. "I just like to catch fish — any fish. And this just put some structure around it."

Wozniak doesn't pass up many chances. He often plans trips around common game fish, but doesn't discriminate. He'll also spend time going after non-game species like chub, koi and sarcastic fringehead.

One challenge is getting the smaller species to bite. He commonly needs tiny bits of bait impaled on size 22 hooks and 2-pound line to entice some of these tiny exotic species.

Catching fish is only half the challenge. He photographs every fish, then identifies it with the assistance of fisheries biologists around the globe. (A very big help is the Web site www.fishbase.org.)

Currently, Wozniak has catalogued more than 660 different species of fish, which he caught while angling in 48 different countries. To date, the hardest species for him to garner was an Atlantic salmon, and his best-represented group is 27 species of rockfish from the Pacific Northwest. In addition, he's totaled 26 various shark types, 23 different groupers and 21 species of snappers.

Although his quest takes him to numerous countries worldwide, Wozniak still finds abundant time to ply his home state's waters, where he recently added a Sacramento perch to his expanding list. But California's

state fish — the exotic golden trout — is notably absent from his list.

And yes, there really is a fish called the sarcastic fringehead. —
Don Vachini □

Migrating Deer Cause Headaches For Motorists

In the months of May and June, about 75 percent of California's deer will be exposed to vehicular traffic.

According to the California Department of Fish and Game, deer-vehicle collisions are all too common, especially when deer migrate between their summer and winter ranges, where highways bisect these zones.

To reduce these altercations — which are as much a concern for public safety as they are for herd-depletion — CalTrans recommends several basic precautions to avoid deer on the roadways:

- Stay alert.
 - Watch for "Deer Crossing" signs.
 - Scan ahead for animals, and
 - Use high beams at night when there is no oncoming traffic.
- In the event that all else fails, and you are about to hit a deer:
- Lift your foot off the accelerator.
 - Grasp the steering wheel firmly with both hands.
 - Steer straight and stay in your lane,
 - Brake fairly hard, but without locking your brakes and skidding.

Above all, don't use any extraordinary measures to avoid the deer. That can put you in danger of crossing into oncoming traffic, veering off the road or rolling your vehicle.

If you do hit the animal, safely move to the shoulder of the road, stop your car and turn on its hazard lights. Check to make sure any passengers are not injured.

- Do not approach the deer or attempt to kill an injured deer. The thrashing animal could injure you or force you into traffic.
- Report the crash to the police and your insurance company.

CalTrans marks deer-migration sites on state highways by erecting "Deer Crossing" signs.

The state also keeps roadside vegetation cut back so that drivers can better see the roadsides.—
Don Vachini □

Clinics Sharpen Hunters' Skills

In order to help hunters and outdoors enthusiasts take a step beyond basic wilderness skills, the state is offering statewide clinics.

Clinics include sessions on hunting turkeys, upland game, waterfowl and big game. In each of the clinics, topics covered include the types of firearms and ammunition, importance of sighting in the firearm, gauging distance, scouting, tracking, field-dressing, shoot/don't-shoot scenarios, hunter ethics, landowner-hunter relationships, conservation and safety.

The date, description, location and cost of each of the seven remaining clinics are as follows:

- June 7: Wild Pig Hunting — Valley of the Moon Gun Club in Sonoma. \$40 fee.
- June 21 through 22: Land Navigation and Wilderness Survival — Bushytail Campgrounds, in Shasta-Trinity National Forest. \$60 fee.
- Aug. 2: Wild Pig Hunting — Tejon Ranch, in southern Kern County. \$40 fee.
- Sept. 13: Upland Game Hunting — Wilderness Unlimited property, in Williams. \$40 fee.
- Sept. 20: Waterfowl Hunting — Wilderness Unlimited property, in Williams. \$40 fee.
- Sept. 20, Upland Game Hunting — High Desert Hunt Club, near Gorman. \$40 fee.
- Sept. 27, Waterfowl Hunting — San Jacinto Wildlife Area, in Riverside County. \$40 fee.

To learn more information about these clinics or to register, check out the Advanced Hunter Education Web site at www.dfg.ca.gov/huntclinics. —
Don Vachini □

Golden Trout Project Shines

Ever since settlers during the 1860s discovered the gaudy golden trout in streams of the upper Kern Plateau, this fish has remained a favorite of back-country anglers.

In 1978, the 310,000-acre Golden Trout Wilderness was designated to protect the trout's ancestral southern Sierra Nevada waters. But even so, California's state fish has struggled.

Most attribute its difficulties to habitat degradation, hybridization with genetically similar rainbow trout and, at lower elevations, predation by non-native brown trout.

Biologists recognize three native subspecies of goldens in the state:

- California golden, also known as Volcano Creek golden,
- Little Kern golden, and
- Kern River rainbow.

While the Little Kern golden is listed as threatened, there are also concerns about the other two subspecies. That has led to focused conservation efforts.

In 2004, the California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cal Trout and Trout Unlimited instituted the Golden Trout Project to preserve the fish in its native range.

They signed a conservation agreement and dedicated \$1.3 million over five years to the project.

In addition, Orvis helped raise more than \$90,000. Patagonia's ongoing World Trout Program has accounted for an additional \$13,000 for golden conservation efforts.

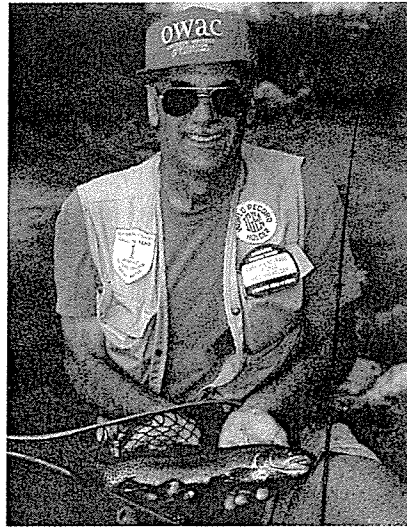
In 2004, volunteers in the Golden Trout Wilderness began catching and testing fish to properly identify and isolate genetically pure strains.

In 2005, volunteers built cattle exclusion fences, repaired head-cut banks and continued collecting data.

By 2006, cattle grazing was tightly controlled or phased out within the wilderness.

By 2007, barriers were erected to prevent hybridization. The groups stocked pure genetic trout in headwater sections.

Thanks to Trout Unlimited, DFG and Cal Trout — who continue to coordinate a variety of ongoing restoration



Most stream golden trout measure well under 10 inches, but you'll find an occasional lake golden like this 14-incher. Photo by Don Vachini.

and monitoring activities within Inyo and Sequoia national forests and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park — the colorful residents appear to be gaining a much stronger foothold throughout their home waters.

For updated information on the project, you can call (415) 392-8887 or visit www.caltrout.org. □

Tips On Staying Safe In Bear Country

California has as many as 35,000 black bears, and their population is growing wherever suitable habitat exists. The DFG reminds anglers, campers and hikers enjoying California's backcountry to follow simple precautions to limit bear encounters.

A key element to safe camping is limiting food odors that attract bears.

"Problems begin when bears learn to associate an easy food supply with humans," said Doug Updike, DFG statewide bear program coordinator.

"Once this happens, the bear becomes habituated or conditioned to go after human food because it's easy." Food is cited in the majority of incidents involving bears.

Their access to human food — from garbage overflowing to residential

dumpsters, to candy bars and sandwiches hidden in a tent — is the main ingredient for disaster. Many people don't realize that feeding wildlife provides animals with false food sources, habituating them to human hands and can change their behavior from foraging to trying to take food from humans.

The DFG's Keep Me Wild campaign was developed to help address the increasing number of conflicts between black bears and people.

- Store food and toiletries in bear-proof containers or in an airtight container in the trunk of your vehicle, in tents or backpacks.

- Keep a camp clean by tidying and storing food and garbage immediately after meals. Use bear-proof garbage cans whenever possible.

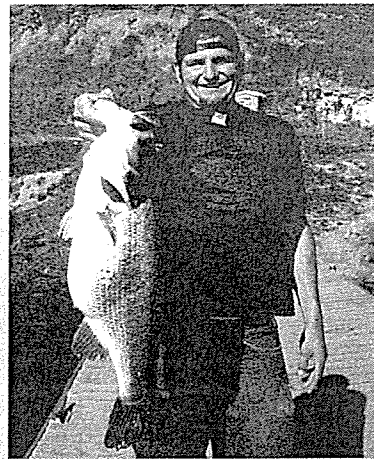
- Don't bury or burn excess food. Bears will still be attracted to the real smell.

- While hiking, make enough noise to avoid any surprise encounter with a bear.

- If you do encounter a bear, never approach it, but do not run. Instead, face the animal, make noise and try to appear as large as possible.

- If attacked, fight back. If a bear attacks anyone, call 911 followed by the DFG 24-hour dispatch center (916) 445-0045. □

By Don Vachini



Anglers are catching lots of double-digit bass lately. Nick Sepulveda of Orange used a Berkley Power Worm to catch and release this 14-pound, ounce largemouth at Irvine. Photo courtesy of Steve Carson.

Anglers Owe Thanks To Project Kokanee

Chartered as a non-profit corporation in 1992, the California Inland Fisheries Foundation has sought to improve the state's kokanee salmon resource.

During the past 15 years, its Project Kokanee has not only maintained a unique partnership with the DFG, but has helped revitalize the state's landlocked sockeye fishery.

Through a formal "memorandum of understanding" with the DFG, Project Kokanee has provided money and services to improve fishing opportunities. The organization has donated more than \$100,000 in equipment and supplies to help DFG

hatcheries and the Fish Health Laboratory.

Members have also volunteered more than 1,000 hours annually to augment DFG efforts for kokanee egg-taking efforts, fish-rearing activities, and much-needed repairs at the San Joaquin River Hatchery.

Ongoing state and Project Kokanee research isolates those lakes where *Oncorhynchus nerka* thrive and evaluates the individual water's carrying capacity. Results strongly indicate that stocking smaller numbers of fish (in most lakes, normally between 25,000 to 50,000) often results in larger trophy-sized specimens, due to less competition for food.

Currently, kokanee inhabit at least 25 lakes throughout Northern California. August is a prime time for anglers to begin targeting them.

Now grown to nearly 1,300 paid members, Project Kokanee has recently been joined by Project King Salmon and Project Rainbow Trout. In nine years, more than 10 million fingerlings have been planted — amazingly, with no charge to the state because it is all-volunteer. □

Special Sage Grouse Season

Hunters seeking a challenge should check out the upcoming sage grouse season.

"We are offering limited hunts for an exceptional native Western game bird," said Tom Blankinship, DFG Game Bird Program Manager. "Large portions of sage grouse habitat occur on Bureau of Land Management lands, offering good public hunting opportunities."

Four hunts are scheduled for early September in Lassen and Mono counties. Working these arid sage lands for this hearty bird is a real challenge. Expect rugged terrain and hot, dry conditions. Hunters are advised to bring plenty of water.

Hunts are in the East Lassen, Central Lassen, North Mono and South Mono zones. In Lassen County, the proposed bag limit is two sage grouse per season; Mono County allows one bird per season. Hunters may apply for only one zone.

Sage grouse hunting is by permit only, issued through a random drawing. Hunters may apply by sending a postcard with their name, 2007-08 California hunting license number, residential address and the hunt zone they want to California Department of Fish and Game, Sage Grouse Permit Drawing, 1740 North Market Blvd., Sacramento, CA, 95834.

You could also go online to www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing.

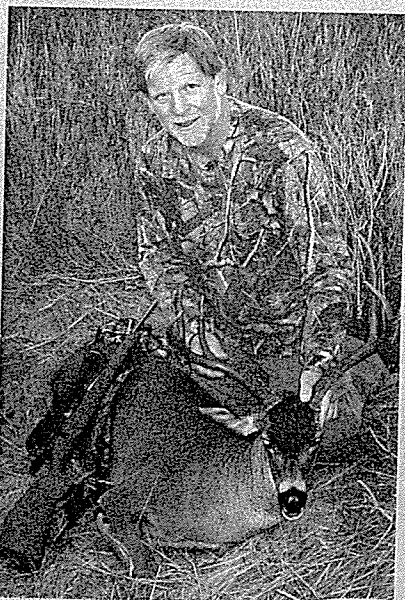
Along with a valid hunting license, all hunters are required to have an Upland Game Bird Stamp. For more information, call (916) 227-2268, or e-mail gunderwo@dfg.ca.gov. □

By Don Vachini

Find A Second Deer-Hunting Location In Case Of Closure

The general deer season, covering all or part of 29 counties from Mendocino to Los Angeles, is set to open in early August.

The statewide A Zone deer season is based primarily on consideration for breeding season and seasonal herd movements. But the Department of Fish and Game reminds hunters that unpredictable wildfires can alter hunting plans — and that fire restrictions can limit a tag holder's access to certain sections.



George Liebermann went to his second Zone A location in Sonoma County to take this 3-pointer. Photo by Don Vachini.

"Each year, some hunters face the possibility that a devastating fire season may impact their planned hunting trips," said Craig Stowers, DFG's deer program coordinator. "If localized restrictions are in place, be flexible, shift plans and focus on another site within the zone you selected"

To find maps of hunting zones, visit www.dfg.ca.gov and go to [/hunting/deer/deer_maps.html](http://hunting/deer/deer_maps.html).

You'll find updated fire information at the same Web site. Just type in [/hunting/biggame.html](http://hunting/biggame.html), or you can contact the specific national forests.

Despite last year's devastating fires, Stowers said, only a few of the 179,169 deer-tag holders were affected by fire restrictions. Some of them asked for refunds. You must submit a refund request for unused tags prior to the earliest hunting season for which the tag is valid. For more information on the state's refund policy, call (916) 928-5805. □

IN THE FIELD

Web Site Tracks Human-Coyote Encounters

Long a symbol of the Wild West, coyotes used to instinctively shy away from civilization. But in recent decades, their behavior has changed, with many taking up residence in populous Southern California.

One estimate by the California Department of Fish and Game says that the city of Los Angeles alone has some 10,000 song dogs within its city limits. The University of California has been studying these animals carefully because they have become thoroughly habituated in cities and basically ignore people.

They devour increasing numbers of cats and small dogs, and eat pet food left outside. They also feast on an overpopulation of rats. Some are even getting aggressive toward humans.

To track this coyote explosion, the UC Cooperative Extension launched www.coyotesbytes.org during 2007. The site provides insight into the ecology and management of coyotes in urban and suburban areas.

Now covering events involving coyotes in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties, it aims to eventually cover all of California.

The interactive site relates various information, includes a map showing locations of human-coyote encounters, and has a way for you to submit data. □

Dove Season Opens Sept. 1

When 2008's dove season opens, more than 90,000 hunters are expected to take to the field — an above-average turnout, since the opener falls on Labor Day Weekend.

According to Tom Blankinship, DFG's upland game bird coordinator, hunters are expected to harvest more than 1.5 million doves this season, which runs Sept. 1 through 15 and Nov. 10 through Dec. 24.

The invasive Eurasian collared dove

is now common in some locations in Southern California. Last season, it became legal game and can now be included in the daily bag limit of 10 and possession limit of 20, said Blankinship.

According to state law, hunters are required to leave one fully feathered wing attached to doves when transporting them.

The DFG operates a series of wildlife areas and ecological reserves from Shasta Valley Wildlife Area in the north to the Imperial Valley in the south. Many areas and reserves have open or limited dove hunting opportunities.

The Game Bird Heritage Program, funded through the sale of upland game bird stamps, provided over \$100,000 this year to plant safflower, millet and sunflower crops on state lands and on partnership private lands in the Imperial Valley, which provide free public access.

Check www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/ for information on public lands managed for dove hunting.

(Editor's Note: For a feature article on dove hunting in California, see page 24.) □

Plants Up, But Trout Contest Continues

This Labor Day Weekend, Troutstock Eastern Sierra 2008, hosted by Mammoth Lakes, is back for a fourth season.

The Troutstock concept was conceived three years ago when DFG budget shortfalls reduced the amount of trout planted in Eastern Sierra lakes and streams from Bridgeport to Mammoth Lakes, said Dan Lyster, Mono County economic development director.

Residents who rely heavily on revenue generated by trout fishing are committed to providing anglers with the very best conditions for freshwater fishing in California, he said.

With a huge assist from local trout rancher Tim Alpers, officials devised an annual event that would not only generate money for additional trout

plants, but also provide fun for anglers of all ages and abilities.

The gathering, from Aug. 28 through Sept. 1, offers trout fishing, prizes and family opportunities with a definite emphasis on introducing families and kids to fishing.

Operating with a special-use permit from Inyo National forest, the Troutstock festival features a kids' fishing pond, casting demonstrations, kids' fishing games and live entertainment as well as a multitude of family-friendly activities.



Catch some trout like this rainbow during the annual Troutstock tournament and you could earn yourself some cash. Photo by Ernie Cowan.

A guaranteed \$10,000 in cash prizes, a VIP Stealth fishing boat and motor, a Ford 350 Super Duty truck and a Mammoth Lakes vacation package are up for grabs.

In addition, the major hook is the chance to win a million dollars, Lyster said. Kids 15 and under registered in Kidstock also have a chance to win a \$25,000 college fund prize.

Under guidelines, all anglers catching tagged trout receive prizes ranging from \$200 to \$2,500.

Information regarding the 2008 competition details, prizes and on-line registration will be available at www.troutstock.com. □

By Don Vachini

IN THE FIELD

Coastal Salmon Stamp To The Rescue?

Earlier this year, the Pacific Fishery Management Council closed all federal waters along the California coast to chinook fishing.

And the California Fish and Game Commission voted to shut down all but one river to recreational and commercial salmon fishing.

In response to this epic closure, one group, the Recreational Fishing Alliance, is backing a proposal for a Federal Salmon Stamp.

It's to be modeled after the Federal Duck Stamp, which since 1934 has raised more than \$600 million for wildlife habitat conservation.

With a potential cost of \$15 for

recreational anglers and \$150 for commercial fishermen, the proposed coastal Salmon Stamp would raise millions of dollars for salmon restoration and habitat conservation.

Groups are floating a proposal for a Federal Salmon Stamp, to be modeled after the Federal Duck Stamp, issued annually since 1934.

The federal government would use funds to:

- Purchase important salmon habitat and water contracts,
- Build new hatcheries and replace

facilities that have become environmentally obsolete, and

• Pay for technologies to protect salmon, such as water-diversion screening, culvert replacement and safe passage through man-made obstructions.

According to Jim Donofrio of the Alliance, people who go fishing are the strongest advocates for the conservation and restoration of salmon.

"A Federal Salmon Stamp is the perfect way for all salmon fishermen to work together to make meaningful contributions to the long-term sustainability of this valuable resource," he said. □

State Sportsmen Spend Nearly \$10 Million A Day

California's 1.7 million hunters and anglers are among the most prominent and influential of all demographic groups, wielding a significant impact on the economy.

According to a recent report, they spend more than \$3.6 billion a year.

Hunting and Fishing: Bright Stars of the American Economy, a report produced by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, uses results from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service's 2006 national survey of fishing, hunting and wildlife recreation, as well as statistics, to spotlight the impact that hunters and anglers have on the economy.

Said Jeff Crane, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation president, "Because sportsmen enjoy hunting or fishing alone or in small groups, they are overlooked as a constituency and as a substantial economic force.

"When you compare spending by

hunters and anglers to other sectors of the state's economy, their impact becomes more tangible."

Each year, spending by California sportsmen:

- Supports more jobs in California than the Naval Station in San Diego: 53,500 jobs versus 43,000.
- Accounts for \$3.6 billion in revenues, more than the \$3.3 billion earnings of Milpitas-based SanDisk.
- Tops the \$3 billion cash receipts of the state's grape crop.

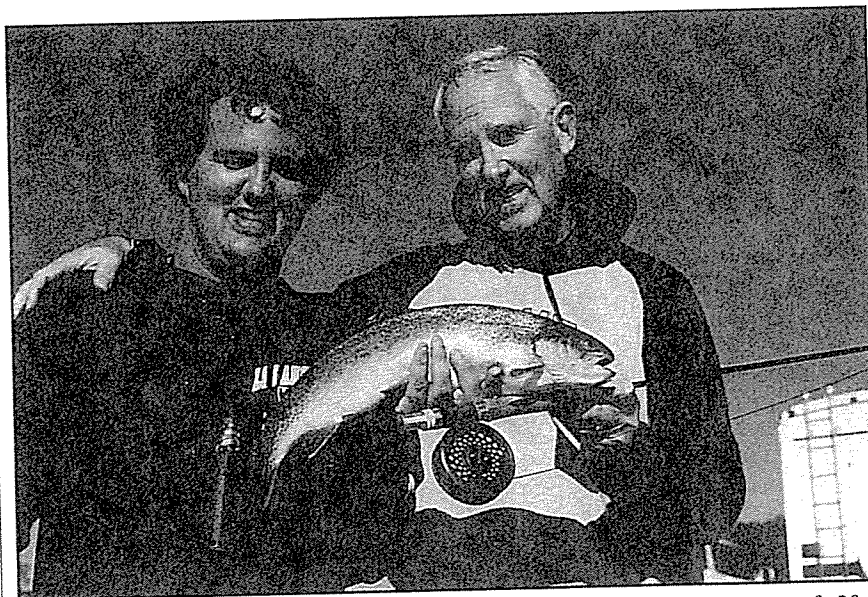
The study also determined that:

- 1.8 million California residents hunt and fish each year, more than the 1.7 million who attend San Diego Chargers, Sacramento Kings and Oakland Raiders games combined.

• California sportsmen spend an annual \$224 million on outboard boats and motors.

The economic stimulus of hunting and fishing equates to an astounding \$9.8 million a day being pumped into the state's economy.

"It's a fairly simple equation," said Crane. "Hunters and anglers mean jobs in-state and in the local communities that have made an effort to maintain their hunting and fishing opportunities." □



California anglers and hunters have an impact on the state's economy of \$9.8 million a day. Photo by Don Vachini.

By Don Vachini

Duck Out For Some Waterfowling

This November, waterfowling has plenty of public and private opportunities while ducks continue to seek open water throughout the state.

In the north of the state, mid-month rains should draw fair numbers of ducks. During December and January, Aleutian geese commonly peak at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, where hunting is allowed on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Call (707) 733-5406 for more information.

Ducks usually begin to show in the Willow Creek, Dakin and Fleming wildlife areas near Susanville, and in the nearby Ash Creek Wildlife Area. Call these wildlife areas at (530) 254-6644. They're open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Mallards, teal, widgeon, pintails and snow geese are common at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. A good north wind or calm, foggy days traditionally provide the best shooting here. Call (530) 846-7500.

Located 50 miles from Bakersfield, the Kern National Wildlife Refuge offers one of the few options for birds on the move.

Drought conditions in the south make for scarce water conditions, but this refuge is expected to have decent results. Call (661) 725-2767.

In the private sector, Wilderness Unlimited has added a trio of acquisitions to compliment its more than 35 existing duck and goose clubs, with holdings in the Fall River, Colusa, Delta, Los Banos, El Centro and high desert areas. Serious birders can follow the flocks as they choose.

For more information, call 1-877-611-4868, or visit the Web site www.wildernessunlimited.com.

—Don Vachini □

See related waterfowl hunting story on Page 17.

Where Was This Ocean Salmon Spawned?

There's an alarming lack of meaningful data for defining the migration patterns of Pacific salmon. Currently, two projects tap genetics and GPS technology to change that fact.

According to John Carlos Garza, a research geneticist with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Santa Cruz, the study would link ocean locations where fish are caught with the very rivers where they were spawned.

Participating fishermen would land salmon, use a GPS unit to pinpoint the catch location and take a small clip from a fin, to be analyzed later.

"Through the use of genetic testing and GPS tracking," said Garza, "fishermen could be directed to avoid weaker salmon stocks from rivers with low runs. Conversely, they could also receive access to fish from rivers with larger spawning runs."

The other project is part of the four-year-old Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking project.

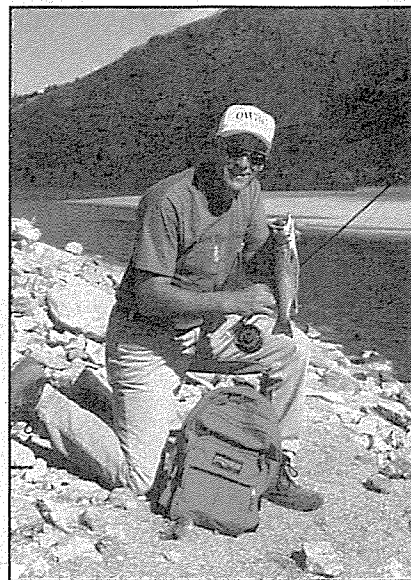
Canadian biologists have been implanting microchip transmitters in salmon smolts from various Canadian rivers. High-tech acoustic receivers are positioned from Gray's Harbor, Wash., to the Bering Sea.

When an implanted fish crosses a receiver, the location, water temperature, salinity and speed is uploaded to a command center.

—Don Vachini □

Brookie Season Extended

As temperatures dip, adventure-some anglers can still experience some rewarding brook trout action, thanks to a mid-November extension in the season. A few good locations



Author Don Vachini landed this hefty brook trout after a 3-mile hike into the Hoover Wilderness during one early November. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

to spend these extra weeks would be still-water destinations in the Trinity, Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges.

In Northern California, Marble Mountain and Trinity Alps wilderness area information can be obtained from the Shasta-Trinity National Forest headquarters at (530) 926-4511.

Get information about Lassen National Forest at (530) 257-2151.

Modoc National Forest headquarters is at (530) 233-4611. The Desolation Wilderness near Lake Tahoe is governed by the El Dorado National Forest. Call (530) 644-6048.

The central state's Stanislaus National Forest, at (209) 532-3671, has information on both the west slope Sierra Nevada's Mokelumne and Carson-Iceberg wildernesses.

Hoover Wilderness info can be obtained from Toiyabe National Forest at (760) 932-7070. For southern Sierra information, contact Sierra National Forest at (209) 487-4155 and ask for a John Muir Wilderness map. DFG information is also at www.dfg.ca.gov. —Don Vachini □

Continued on page 56...

IN THE FIELD

Shopping For A Sportsman?

Outdoorsmen are so varied a group, involved in so many activities, that trying to find them a meaningful (as well as useful) gift can often be a daunting chore.

Thankfully, you can find a plethora of stocking stuffer possibilities, either by patronizing stores at your local shopping mall or industry giants like Cabela's (at www.cabelas.com) and Coleman's (www.coleman.com).

All offer choice gifts ranging from under \$5 to well over \$100.

- **Gifts under \$5:**

Chapstick, hand warmers, mini-fans, assorted fishing lures, mini-headlamps and key-ring flashlights.

- **Gifts under \$10:**

Assorted prepared fishing baits, first-aid kit, assorted tackle, fishing line, wind-resistant lighter, socks, gloves, digital compass and emergency blanket.

- **Gifts under \$25:**

The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada by John Muir Laws is a full-color naturalist's bible. Buy it at www.heydaybooks.com/public/books/lgsn.html.

California Healthy by Patricia Hamilton is a green guide to dining well, having fun and staying fit. Visit www.athomeontheroad.com/media.php.

The *Day Hikes* books by Robert Stone are written and illustrated for various regions around California.

- **Gifts under \$50:**

Outdoor-oriented magazine subscriptions or extensions of existing ones, enhancement stamps, a 2009 fishing license, and assorted clothing items. And then, there are always pre-paid gift cards or certificates for a favorite outdoor-equipment store or Web site.

This year's big-ticket items are personal locator beacons, or PLBs, available for around \$650. Retailing for about \$170 are satellite personal trackers or SPOTs, which communicate through the GEOS international satellite system for worldwide coverage. A call alerts a ground control center to relay the distress signal and GPS coordinates to a local search and rescue team. For more information, visit www.findmespot.com. □

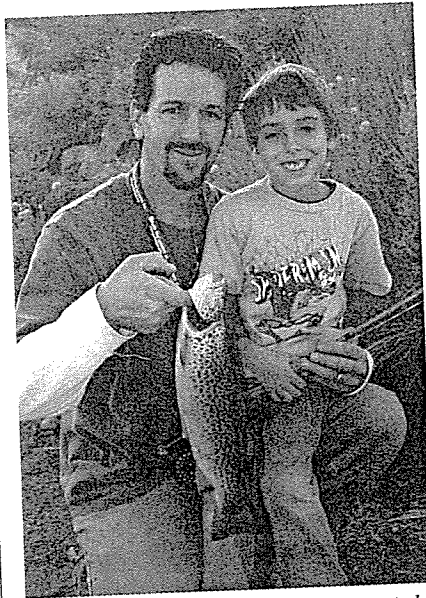
Fish For Hotspots On Line

As part of the next wave of online innovations, a pair of Web sites aims to change the way fishermen interact online.

Bridging the gap between angling and surfing the net, both my-fishing-report.com and hooked-in.com focus on two simple topics: bragging about the fish you've caught and finding great new places to fish.

These sites function as journals to record fishing experiences and as a quick way to show off how well you did on the water. Anglers can share and showcase their catches, photos, strategies and locations as well as make new contacts.

Each member receives his own personal fishing report. Membership is free and includes unlimited photo storage.



Thanks to two new Web sites, it might just be easier to locate new fishing honeypots. Photo by Don Vachini.

Zoom in on a high-resolution satellite map of the earth, and you can mark the exact spot where you landed your trophy — right down to the log under which it was hooked.

Then you can type in your story, upload images or movie footage you have to provide proof and quickly pass the report on to friends.

Are you eager to guard a productive spot? Then you can select an option for "Secret Locations" — which can be viewed only by yourself and the friends you choose.

Fishermen can compete for prizes or form groups and clubs on line. Some great functions let you swap notes and post messages.

At first, you might find it difficult to use the map interface. But it won't take long to get familiar with the format and start navigating your way to useful fishing know-how.

For additional information, log on to either www.my-fishing-report.com or www.hooked-in.com. □

Reduce Risk In Ice-Fishing Adventures

Frigid weather signals prime conditions for ice-fishing at several suitable Golden State locations.

But here are some safety tips that every ice-trekker should observe:

- In addition to a personal flotation device, wear warm, waterproof clothing, gloves, sunglasses and sunscreen.

- Never fish alone. Leave information about your plans with someone — where you intend to fish, as well as when you expect to return.

- Ice varies in thickness and condition. Check ice as you proceed. Be extremely cautious when crossing thinner ice near creek mouths, points of land and springs.

- Avoid venturing onto blue ice. This indicates that melting is underway, and ice can shift position as wind direction changes. Wind and wave action can quickly break up large areas of ice.

- If you can see open water on any frozen lake, stay off of it!

- Carry a set of hand spikes to help you work your way back onto the surface of the ice if you fall through.

- Carry a safety line that you can throw to someone who has gone through the ice. □

By Don Vachini

IN THE FIELD

Anglers Caught More Steelhead In 2008

Anglers who fish for steelhead are required to purchase and complete the Steelhead Fishing Report-Restoration Card, which the Department of Fish and Game uses to analyze catch and population trends. The sale of these report cards is the only long-term funding source dedicated to steelhead. The funds contribute to projects to help in the recovery of California's steelhead populations and the restoration of their habitat.

According to a report released by the DFG, anglers' steelhead catches during 2008 showed improvement. Catch data gathered through the program revealed that greater numbers of steelhead — wild and hatchery combined — were caught per trip, particularly on the state's coastal rivers.

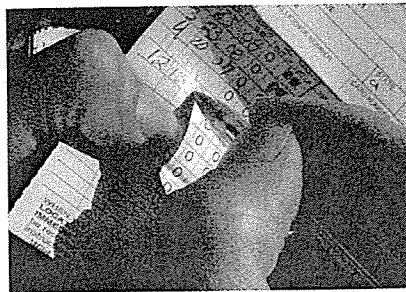
"This is great news for anglers and important information for steelhead recovery efforts," said Neil Manji, DFG Fisheries Branch Chief. "We're seeing the benefits of this outstanding program," he added.

Manji said the expense that anglers pay to get the card has funded numerous projects to modify and remove barriers to fish passage, install screen diversions, stabilize erosion and provide a host of valuable information on steelhead.

Since it started in 1993, the SFRR has provided \$1.2 million for more than 100 projects to monitor, restore and enhance California's steelhead resources, and to educate the public about anadromous species and watershed health. Many of the projects funded by report-card fees are chronicled in a report prepared by the DFG for the Legislature, which provides an overview of the accomplishments of the program since it began.

It's available to the public online at www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/documents/SAL_SH/SHRC_LegRpt_2007.pdf.

Anglers are reminded to return their completed 2008 Steelhead Fishing Report-Restoration Cards to the DFG by Jan. 31. □



An angler fills out a steelhead report card. Return your card by Jan. 31. Photo by J.D. Richey.

Kids Team Breaks 982 Clays

Young shooters of sporting clays from across California earned state titles at the state championship.

The competition, featuring some of California's top young marksmen, was held during July at the Camanche Hills Hunting Preserve in Ione.

In 2008, 9,135 youths from more than 40 states competed, and 1,562 adults volunteered as coaches and directors. Top varsity teams qualified for the Scholastic Clay Target Program National Championships, held at the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta, Ill.

While some of these young shooters will go on to compete at the collegiate level, the best of them could be selected to attend an Olympic development camp in Colorado Springs.

Here, then, are the results from the competition:

- The team Top Guns shot 982 clays out of 1,000, taking first place in the Varsity Division, which includes grades 9 through 12. Members are Nicholas Meyer of Lakeside, Evan Marsch of Encinitas, Roger Siewerth of Poway, Kurtis Sorchy of Lakeside and De Savage of Bonsall.

- Second place went to the A&A Blue team, which shot 974.

- First place in the Junior Varsity Division was A&A Blue, with 957 breaks. The team was Garrett Millsap of Pioneer, Nigel Dreksler of Jackson, Robert Apedaile of Amador City, Daniel Lindecker of Volcano and Miranda Ornouski of Pine Grove.

- The second-place JR team was

the Santa Maria Wild Bunch, with a score of 953.

- The Santa Ynez Target Crushers won first place in the Intermediate Advanced Division, grades 6 through 8, with a 940 score. They are Wyatt Caldera and Jordan Puccinelli of Santa Ynez, Anthony Holmes of Goleta, and Ashley Carroll and Jackson Tomasini of Solvang.

- Second place went to Team Angels IA, with a score of 890.

- The winner of the Intermediate Entry Division, grades 6 through 8, was A&A Blue, with 888 breaks.

Darian Keeling of Jackson, Colton Smith of Wilseyville, Robert Boitano of Valley Springs, and Jason Moore and Broc Hayes, both of Ione, made up the team.

- Second place went to Coon Creek with a 840 score.

- The Santa Ynez Clay Busters Rookie Division team, made up of shooters in grades 5 and under, hit 418 clays and won first in their division. They are Justin Mortensen, Tanner Lockwood, Bryce Hutchison and Stanley Baker, all of Santa Ynez, and Trey Mercado of Buellton.

- Second place went to the Santa Maria Terminators, with a score of 368.

For more information, visit www.nssf.org/sctcp. □

County Goes To The Dogs

Long noted for its myriad outdoor choices, Mono County is now going to the dogs — literally.

The number of people who travel with their dogs is growing. And as those travelers are well aware, finding lodging, dining and certain activities can be difficult.

With this in mind, Mono County recently proclaimed itself as "dog-friendly," expanding options for pets on the road.

For a full list of canine services, e-mail Sarah McCahill of the Mono County Tourism Commission at smccahill@mono.ca.gov.

Or call her at (769) 924-1738. □

By Don Vachini

IN THE FIELD

Go Online To Get Your Catch Certificates

The International Game Fish Association maintains world records in line, tippet and all-tackle categories for both freshwater and saltwater game species. Over the past decade and a half, it has included a plethora of additional categories, all published in the annual *World Record Game Fishes* book.

IGFA president Ron Kramer has acknowledged yet another expansion now being offered. The IGFA's latest innovative category is intended for those anglers who land fish that, however noteworthy, fall short of record status.

"Under this program," Kramer said, "anglers of all ages can commemorate their personal accomplishments with an IGFA Catch Certificate."

Certificates are available for both fresh and saltwater species. For an application, visit the IGFA Web site, www.igfa.org/catch_certificates.asp.

Each certificate costs \$15. All you need to provide are the angler's name, the species, date and place it was caught and its estimated weight.

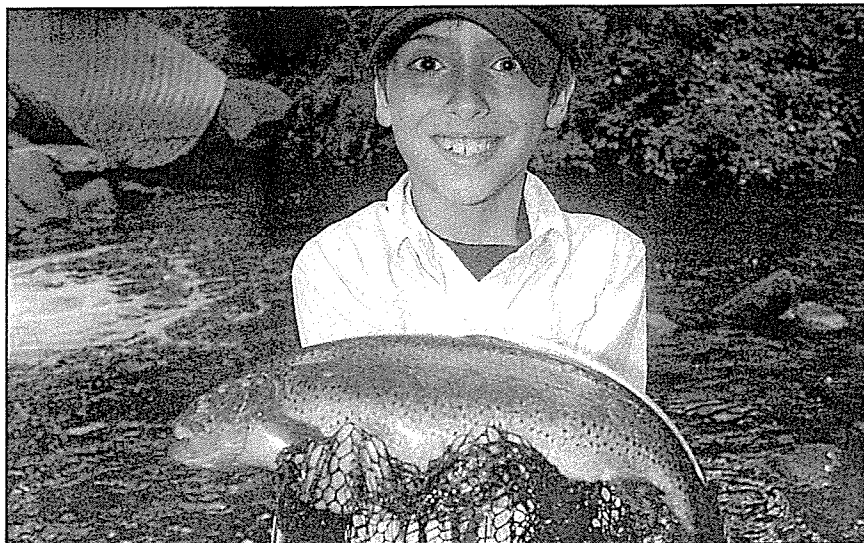
Printed on high-quality paper, these certificates feature beautiful illustrations of the fresh- or saltwater fish species, the gold-embossed IGFA logo and the president's signature.

For more information, call IGFA headquarters at (954) 927-2628, or e-mail HQ@igfa.org. For a direct link to the certificate application, visit www.igfa.org/documents/IGFA_catch%20certificate_application.doc.

OTHER CATEGORIES

IGFA's popular record book contains the junior angler programs, which are divided into male and female divisions with Small Fry (up to age 10) and Junior (ages 11 to 16) categories. It lists freshwater state records (line and tippet classes) in addition to the Royal Slam, Grand Slam, 10-Pound Bass, 10-Pound Bonefish and 25-Pound Snook clubs.

According to Kramer, these prestigious programs involve either single catches or the compilation of designated multiple species, in habitats ranging from high-elevation mountains and inland lakes to the deep sea.



This rainbow trout doesn't break the current International Game Fish Association Small Fry record, but the noteworthy catch now could be commemorated with an IGFA Catch Certificate. Photo by Don Vachini.

Royal Slam clubs consist of bass, billfish, salmon, shark, trout and tuna.

Grand Slam clubs include Offshore Grand, Offshore Super Grand, Inshore Grand and Super Grand, Pacific Offshore Grand and Super, Pacific Inshore Grand, Pacific Inshore Super, Tuna Grand, Tuna Super Grand, Mediterranean Grand and Super Grand, Atlantic Coast Grand and Super Grand, Boat Grand and Super Grand. Check out igfa.org for which specific species you need to catch to attain an award. □

Birder Book Something To Squawk About

When Roger Tory Peterson first wrote and illustrated his pocket-sized guide for bird watchers, publishers questioned whether Americans would be interested in identifying birds.

At least four editors turned down *A Field Guide to the Birds* before Houghton Mifflin took a chance on the then-unknown author. Published in 1934, the 2,000-copy first printing was sold out in just two weeks.

The Brewster Medal, the highest award in the field of ornithology, was bestowed upon the second edition of

this book, which emphasizes characteristics of birds seen at a distance. The guide utilizes pattern drawings, field marks and comparisons between species to help identify each one.

Currently published in five editions, *A Field Guide to the Birds* has sold more than 8 million copies. Most college and university ornithology courses now use it as their bible.

Indeed, generations have learned to identify birds quickly and accurately, prompting *Time* magazine to call Peterson "the world's most famous birder and the man who single-handedly opened up ornithology to the masses."

To celebrate of the centennial of Peterson's birthday on August 28, 2008, a historic collaboration among renowned birding experts and artists was published: the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*.

For the very first time, this new book combines the *Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds* and *Peterson Field Guide to Western Birds* into one single volume. The book includes a fully revised text, 40 new paintings and all-new range maps. It also includes more than three hours of video podcasts to introduce a whole new generation to the wonder of birds.

To obtain more information on this commemorative publication, contact www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/peterson/petersonhome.cfm. □

By Don Vachini

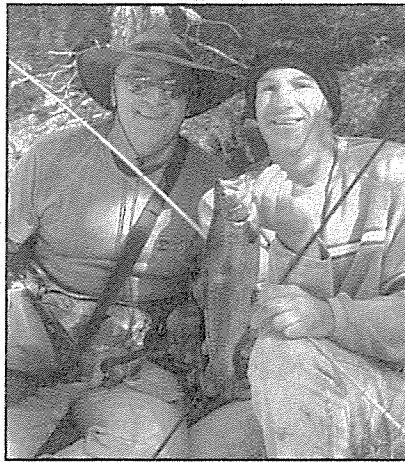
... Continued from page 12

Is Your Boat Ready To Run?

With spring just around the corner, it's time for prudent Golden State boat owners to start readying their craft for lake, river or ocean fishing. But before you hit the water, be sure the boat is in safe and proper running order.

Following is a helpful checklist to ensure an uneventful transition to a good day on the water.

- A week or so before the planned excursion, remove and clean spark plugs or replace with new ones.
 - Place fresh gas in the tank and start the motor out of water. Use high-octane fuel for best performance.
 - Be it a kicker or big-water boat, get the motor running before launching.
 - Top off the gas tank, and any spare containers, the night before a trip.
 - Change oil regularly, especially after running the motor hard. Use quality oil.
 - Verify the bilge pump operation often; make sure that the float switch cuts on as the water level rises. Manually test with the dash switch and be sure it pumps water.
 - Check your navigation lights before you go out. Keep spare bulbs and fuses on board.
 - Remove your prop at the beginning of each season. Grease the prop shaft and reinstall it. When you have the prop off, remove the forward thrust washer and check for any fishing line or debris that may have been caught in the prop. Carry a full set of prop hardware in the boat.
 - Perform a gear case lube every 100 hours or once a year whichever comes first, and be sure to change out the washers every time you lube.
 - Check your trailer brakes often, and do an annual check for corrosion and parts degradation.
 - Grease wheel bearings regularly. Repack annually. Seals, as well as any pitted bearings, should be replaced and lug nuts should be removed, greased and reinstalled with proper torque values.
- Don Vachini □



Writer Don Vachini and son Matt browsed Shasta County Wonderland Web site to find a "secret" spot and caught this fine rainbow there. Photo courtesy of Don Vachini.

Find Fish With Shasta County Web Site

Browsing, surfing or Googling the Internet for information on outdoor locales certainly makes pre-trip planning easier.

One sportsmen's site of note is the recently upgraded Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association Web site. Since SCWA's mission is to promote recreation and tourism throughout its eight-county region, the site is designed to be more interactive with easily followed links to accommodate specific searches, according to Karen Whitaker, SCWA tourism director.

A sportsmen's mecca stretching throughout Northern California's Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity counties, SCWA showcases a plethora of wild-life habitat amid forested mountains and valleys, which are blessed with abundant snow and rainfall. From an outdoor enthusiast's perspective, this region, containing both private and public attractions, has a wide range of outdoor-related activities available.

To plan a getaway, visit www.shastacascade.org and click on each listed water for updated angling information.

Download a free visitor's guide featuring detailed information broken down on a county level, a map of Northern California, a calendar of events, online reservations and in-depth information about each region. —Don Vachini □

Technology Tapped For 'Shark Repellant'

Water enthusiasts along California's coastline are all too aware of the danger posed by sharks. Indeed, skin divers, kayakers and surfers alike are at the mercy of these giant predators, especially during peak arrivals of the great white shark.

However, the Shark Shield, a new device that emits an electronic "force field" designed to repel sharks, could have a profound effect on safe water recreation worldwide.

Shark Shield was developed over the past five years in Australia. The transmitter, rubber-coated antenna and rechargeable battery in a waterproof pack can be mounted on the back of a kayak, surfboard or even on the calf of a diver.

According to Paul Lunn of Shark Shield, the antenna produces an electronic field that extends about 10 feet in diameter to ward off sharks.

It has long been known that electronic fields can attract or repel fish. For more than 20 years, Dick Pool, a retired Bay Area engineer, studied the concept that electronic fields can attract or repel fish. According to Pool, commercial fishermen were aware that their wire downrigger lines could react in a synergism with their boat's hull to create certain electronic fields. His research showed that some electronic fields attracted baitfish, while other fields repelled them.

So far, over 13,000 units have been sold without failure. The cost is roughly from \$680-\$800.

For additional information, visit www.sharkshield.co.za. —Don Vachini □

'Fly' Boys Attain Trout-Fishing Distinction

A pair of father-son teams recently completed their second prestigious California Heritage Trout Challenge. But this time they added their own unique personal twist.

Sebastapol residents, Ken Eide and his 13-year-old son, Johan, plus Chris Bell and his 13-year-old son, Simon, embarked on a three-year quest, trekking to all corners of the state — coastal streams, lofty mountains and high desert — in search of trout. They completed their quest during November 2008 when each took an Eagle Lake rainbow. As part of their self-imposed standards, all fish were caught on fly rods.

The DFG created the Heritage Trout Challenge in 1998 to promote awareness of the diversity of the state's native trout species and to help secure their future. A California heritage trout is a pure-strain, native fish that exists naturally in the home waters of its ancestors of a particular stream, lake or watershed within the state. Its ancestors must have arrived by natural means, having migrated by chance to a particular location through connecting waters when climate and geology were much different from the present day.

Over thousands of generations, geographically isolated trout populations developed into discrete strains, subspecies or even entirely new species, uniquely adapted to a specific habitat. The 11 subspecies are: coastal rainbow-steelhead, Eagle Lake rainbow, Kern River rainbow, McCloud River redband, Goose Lake redband, Warner Valley redband, Little Kern golden trout, California golden trout, coastal cutthroat, Lahontan cutthroat and Paiute cutthroat.

An angler must catch any six of the 11 heritage trout to qualify, and then submit an application that includes photos for documentation to the DFG. Accepted entrants receive a certificate adorned with color representations of the six heritage trout they landed.

Of the approximately 40 anglers statewide who have received their certificates



From left, Ken Eide, son Johan, Chris Bell and son Simon, show their Heritage Trout Challenge Certificates. Photo by Don Vachini.

to date, Chris Bell remains the only one who has landed all 11 specimens.

However, son, Simon and both Eides remain right behind him, lacking only the rare Paiute cutthroat!

For information and application forms, contact www.dfg.ca.gov. □

Endangered Coho Salmon Found

Scientists have discovered juvenile coho salmon on the North Coast in several locations where the endangered fish had not been seen for years.

While the coho remains protected under the Endangered Species Act, the agency reported that their populations in coastal streams between Santa Cruz and Humboldt counties plunged 73 percent compared with the previous spawning season.

In April 2008, it proclaimed that extinction in these drainages might be close at hand.

According to the National Marine Fisheries Services, part of the fault for this demise is due to inadequate forestry rules, which, among other things, allow

too much eroded sediment into spawning habitat. Earlier in 2008, California forestry officials rejected an emergency proposal to protect the imperiled fish even though federal NMFS fisheries regulators supported it.

Among numerous watersheds affected, the Garcia River in Mendocino County has been especially devastated by logging, its silver salmon population dwindling to 1 percent of its previous numbers.

Recently, Jennifer Carah, a field scientist for The Nature Conservancy, was snorkeling in Pardaloe Creek, a remote tributary of the Garcia, when she located a school of the tiny salmon. Since then, coho schools have subsequently been found in 10 areas where they had previously vanished, indicating they are maintaining a slightly stronger finger hold.

The forestry board regulates logging on private land. In 2004, this watershed became part of a "sustainable forestry" experiment, which allows for only selective logging on the land. The area is currently owned by the Conservation Fund, which paid \$18 million to a timber company for the 23,780-acre Garcia River Forest. The funds from this logging operation are then used to pay for restoration and land management. □

By Don Vachini

IN THE FIELD

Judge Blames Pumps For Low Salmon Returns

Although a federal judge recently ruled that California's water system canals are placing wild salmon "unquestionably in jeopardy," he did not impose court-ordered limits on pumping water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Chinook salmon and steelhead historically migrated through the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers until the federal and state system of dams built to deliver water via canals to the state's arid areas blocked their migration.

Currently up to 42 percent of the endangered juvenile fish get crushed because they are sucked into Delta pumps that send water into the canals.

While environmental groups had sought pumping limits to guard the dwindling migrating salmon, U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger declined to do so when the state Department of Water Resources voluntarily agreed to reduce pumping to protect juvenile fish. His opinion eased farmer's fears concerning impacts of water cutbacks on the agricultural industry already besieged by drought. At the same time, his decision validated environmentalist and fishing groups dismayed by the collapse of the state's salmon population.

"Upon initial glance, the department believes that the judge handed down a responsible ruling," said DWR spokesman Ted Thomas. —Don Vachini □

DFG Book, Web Sites, Add Variety to Hunts

It's a good idea to know your options when determining where you will hunt. The *2009 California Hunting Digest Big Game* book provides just such information.

According to James Fong, License and Revenue branch chief for the

DFG, this book is filled with news items, applications for special hunting opportunities and harvest statistics.

"The publication is a must-have book for the hunter and outdoors enthusiast serving as a comprehensive source for big-game hunting opportunities," he said.

Many public lands that allow multiple uses also allow hunting. On pages 18-19, there's a short article called "Public Lands Open for Hunting in California." Although it doesn't list every land, it lists every land-management agency that allows hunting, along with their Web sites and other contact info. Agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, along with some military bases and DFG properties, allow public hunting.

California Hunting Digest editor, Lorna Bernard, also suggests the Public Lands Information Center Web site at www.publiclands.org, which offers a free searchable database of public lands throughout the West. You can enter the term "hunting" and click on California, and it will provide you with a list of every statewide public land that allows hunting.

Private land ownership can also be determined from map resources at your local library, county assessor's

office or at many different Web sites. The free *Hunting Digest* publication is available through most DFG offices and independent license agents. You could also download it at www.dfg.ca.gov/about/hunting/.

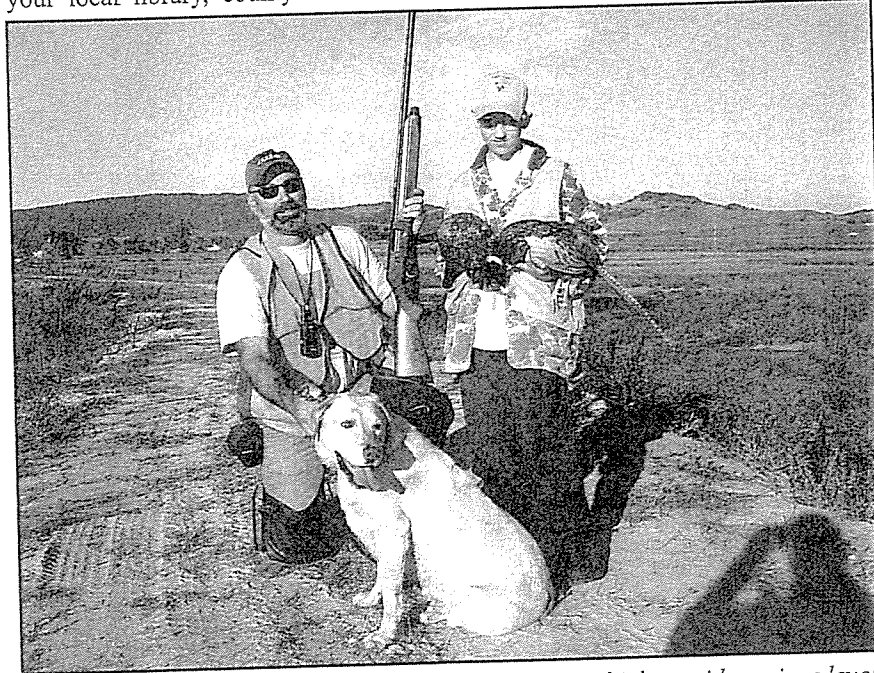
This whole Web site is useful. The hunting guides can be found on the right-hand column. Additional DFG information on how to hunt such species as wild pigs, quail and deer are also available on this site.

With the future in mind, the DFG continues to offer hunting opportunities for beginner hunters. The organization Apprentice Hunts offer various levels of instruction for new and junior hunters. Instruction includes a pre-hunt safety orientation and hunters will receive expert direction and hands-on oversight from Apprentice Hunt instructors.

These hunts are typically open only to hunters in possession of a Junior Hunting License. Kids must be accompanied by an adult.

In lieu of public lands, you may want to also consider joining a private hunting club, such as Wilderness Unlimited, which holds leases on multiple public properties around the state for their members to access for hunting and fishing. —Don Vachini □

Continued on page 56...



The state continues to offer its popular Junior Hunts, which provide various levels of instruction and a chance to hunt. Photo by Don Vachini.

Potential Record Catfish Stumps Biologists

When Ronnie Frye caught an exceptionally large catfish from Lake Isabella, it set in motion a whirlwind couple of weeks — and a much lengthier debate.

Frye and his wife, Amie, were celebrating their third anniversary on Sept. 17, 2008, at this Kern County impoundment when the giant hit.

"I went into shock when I saw it," said Frye of Bakersfield. "We had already caught three nice-sized channel cats, but this one dwarfed the others, and was quite different."

A local DFG biologist surmised it to be a very old white catfish. Its weight on a certified scale registered 26.33 pounds. Since the all-tackle world-record white stands at just over 20 pounds, this fish stood to obliterate the current IGFA standard by more than 5 pounds!

Word spread rapidly and fame quickly followed. First, an appearance on local television station KERO, and then interviews with local newspapers, telephone calls from various media contacts and donations of tackle from various manufacturers.

Biologists and fisheries personnel couldn't reach a consensus as to the exact species. Was it a white or channel?

Frye waded through IGFA application protocol. He took the required photos, assembled scale certification documents and obtained witness signatures. All seemed to be in order.

Then one factor out of his control surfaced. Biologists and fisheries personnel couldn't reach a consensus as to the exact species: white or channel?

After having a plastic mount made, Frye made the fish carcass available for further testing, including samples of its liver and muscle tissue for DNA evaluation.

Dr. Ken Gobalet, a professor of biology at California State University at Bakersfield, meticulously studied the fish but only added more questions to

the puzzle.

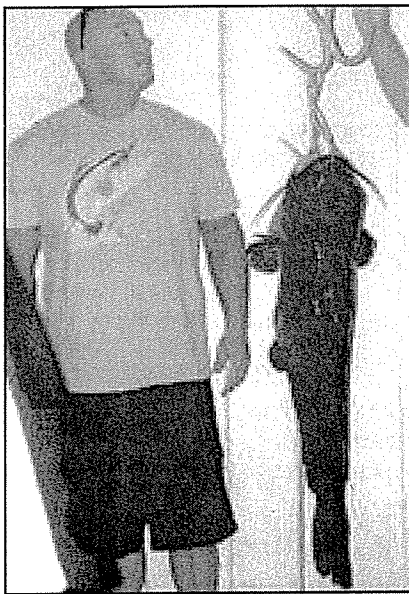
"While the cat's pectoral fin revealed a count of nine rays, indicating a white catfish, its anal fin had 26 rays, the same as a channel cat!"

After more than a month of scrutiny, Gobalet concluded that the fish more than likely was a channel cat but would not rule out the possibility of a hybrid.

Coupled with this decision, Frye finally relinquished his IGFA efforts when he found out it would cost up to \$1,800 for the process of DNA testing. A true sportsman, he is just happy with the experience, which now includes a plastic mount of the behemoth.

"It has been a good ride, a fish story I will have for life," he said.

—Don Vachini □



Despite losing out on a world record, Ronnie Frye is happy about the biggest catfish of his life, whether a channel, white or hybrid. Photo courtesy of Ronnie Frye.

Poacher Hid 335 Birds

A Gilroy man was recently convicted of waterfowl poaching of staggering proportions.

Peter Ignatius Ciraulo, 42, pleaded no contest to possession of an excess of the waterfowl possession limit, failure to declare a migratory game bird (a

swan) and failure to show game upon demand of a Department of Fish and Game warden.

Ciraulo was found to unlawfully possess 253 ducks and 58 geese, well in excess of the possession limits of 14 ducks and eight geese. He also possessed seven live but wounded snow geese.

"Not since the market poaching days of the early 1900s have we seen waterfowl poaching of this scope," said Nancy Foley, chief of DFG's Law Enforcement Division.

During routine patrolling, DFG game wardens Kyle Kroll and Greg Grinton began an investigation and amassed evidence on Ciraulo a few weeks before the close of the waterfowl hunting season in 2008.

On the last day of the hunting season, Kroll and Grinton made contact with Ciraulo. He revealed he had killed a swan, which is protected in California, and eight geese, but also possessed several additional concealed goose breasts hidden in his jacket.

The wardens also found hundreds of birds, mostly waterfowl species, in freezers. The dead birds included specimens of almost every waterfowl species that migrates into California, but also included many non-game, protected species, including a sandhill crane.

A total of 335 birds were discovered during the investigation. Most of them were frozen whole, without having been processed for consumption.

Seven live, crippled snow geese were also found at the residence.

As a result of the conviction, Ciraulo was banned from all hunting in California for one season, placed on two years' probation, ordered to pay \$7,105 and ordered to serve 100 hours community service work at Ducks Unlimited or California Waterfowl Association projects.

—Don Vachini □

Correction

The Lake Oroville bass slot limit noted in a story on Page 28 in the March 2009 issue of *California Game & Fish* was incorrect. Anglers may not harvest bass between 12 and 15 inches long. □

Woman Drops Huge Bull On First Elk Hunt

On the morning of Sept. 6, 2008, Molly Heneks completed a whirlwind chain of events, culminating in a record-book California Roosevelt elk. It was her first attempt at big-game hunting.

Heneks is a 22-year-old student pursuing a degree in wildlife at Feather River College. She told *California Game & Fish* that when she was a youngster growing up on a farm in Carmel Valley, she would hone her skills shooting a .22 at ground squirrels with her dad. However, her modest dream of one day shooting a deer faded with her father's passing in 2005.

While attending college in '06, Heneks' boyfriend, Tyler Jacobsen, introduced her to dove, duck and pheasant hunting. Heneks then resumed her quest for deer, and applied for an X7a tag. Jacobsen also prudently convinced her to enter a random drawing for an elk tag. Astonishingly, she was drawn for one of the two tags.

"As soon as I received the confirmation letter from the DFG in the mail, I started shooting Tyler's .280 Remington to practice," said Heneks. "This was my first time picking up a rifle since that little .22 when I was a kid."

Jacobsen worked with a summer spotted-owl survey crew for a Northern California timber company. Heneks second bit of good fortune occurred when Jacobsen's crew boss, Aaron Griffith, obtained permission for her to hunt on the private timber reserve from Sept. 3 through 6, and came along on the hunt to help.

Griffith, Jacobsen and Heneks hunted for three days without so much as hearing a bugle. But hopes remained high on the hunt's last day. It was still dark as they walked up the redwood-enshrouded trail. California's coastal fog provided them a damp, silent pathway.

"All at once we heard the unmistakable crashing of a bull elk raking his antlers on the branches of red-

wood trees less than 200 yards away," Heneks said. "While we sat down and waited for daylight, the herd was completely unaware of our presence. At one point, the bull came close enough for a glimpse of his massive rack and that unsettled me a bit!"

When the herd backed off a little, Griffith bugled to keep the bull around. "It worked a little too well, as he blind charged toward us," she said. "He couldn't see us, but I didn't have a clear shot either."

As they cautiously arrived at the clearcut where the elk had been grazing, the bull began sending his harem of cows up the hill. "I got on my knee, but Aaron patted me on the back to calm me down and cautioned me to wait so as to not shoot a cow by accident."

When the last cow was on her way up the hill, the bull turned to follow, and Griffith threw out another timely bugle.

"Luckily for me, the bull stopped and gave me a perfect broadside shot. With my heart pounding like a cannon, I put my cross hairs on him, held my breath and squeezed the trigger. The bull just trotted up the hill like nothing happened. But when we went over to where he was standing when I shot, we found a small spot of frothy, lung blood."

The hunters waited for about an hour and then followed the blood trail for 100 yards before they found him lying in the grass.

Heneks confided it was the single most exciting, yet shocking, moment of her life.

"The fact that I even drew a tag for a California Roosevelt elk is just plain amazing," she said. "Basically, the elk was my first big-game attempt, I fired one shot and that was all it took!"

The huge 9x7 scored 322 6/8 Boone and Crockett Club points. The all-time minimum score is 290.

In addition to Jacobsen's .280 Remington, she used hand-loaded ammunition provided by his grandfather.

She was the first person to ever legally hunt this property for elk. According to Griffith, it held several big bulls that the crew knew about. But no one had ever seen the one she

ended up taking.

"He was much larger than the ones we were looking for," he said. "We just stumbled upon him and his herd."

Even though she views the pictures on her wall, Heneks finds it hard to comprehend the massive bull. She remains extremely thankful for the support and guidance of her friends and family (her mother is paying for the head mount).

"I plan to continue hunting," she beamed. "Maybe now I can set my sights on a deer!" □



Molly Heneks, 22, shot a huge California Roosevelt elk in September 2008. It scored a lofty 322 6/8 B&C. Photo courtesy of Molly Heneks.

Pot Gardens No Laughing Matter

Illegal marijuana gardens cultivated on public lands are creating environmental problems of major proportions and hazards to unsuspecting hunters and fishermen who stumble upon them.

In a pair of Northern California counties, trash, toxic chemicals, garbage pits, mini-landfills, animal carcasses and miles of drip irrigation pipe are the kinds of environmental damage officers are seeing, according to Gary Sharpe, associate field manager with the Bureau of Land Management.

"In addition, poaching, pollution and stream diversions are also prob-

Continues on page 56...

...Continued from page 12

lems," he said.

Lake County's public lands have been hotbeds of pot cultivation over the past three years. Officials locate about 350 sites per year. Of the 3 million pot plants seized, 70 percent were on public land. During marijuana growing season, hired laborers live in makeshift camps on public lands and are usually heavily armed.

BLM officials estimate it costs \$1 to \$2 to eradicate each individual plant and four times that much to clean up the mess left behind by growers.

"We could easily go through \$1 million per year for the next five years to clean up what's already been left on BLM lands," Sharpe said. □

Judge Stops Some Trout Stocking

A controversial Superior Court order suspended parts of the popular, 100-year-old Department of Fish and Game trout-stocking program in dozens of California lakes and streams.

About 20 percent of the state's waterways remain off the planting schedule until the DFG concludes an Environmental Impact Report.

The ban was issued in response to a 2006 lawsuit by the Pacific Rivers Council and the Center for Biological Diversity, which claimed the stocking operation didn't comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and harms sensitive populations of native fish and amphibians that share the waterways.

At issue is a broad prohibition against the DFG stocking non-native fish in any freshwater body of water where an environmental report has not been conducted.

The Sacramento Superior Court required the DFG to comply by 2008. But because of delays in the environmental report process, which involves combining the report with a federal Environmental Impact Statement, the petitioning groups sought an interim ban on all fish plants.

Instead, Judge Patrick Marlette told the state to negotiate with the petitioners and agree to where the DFG may continue stocking fish while the studies are completed.

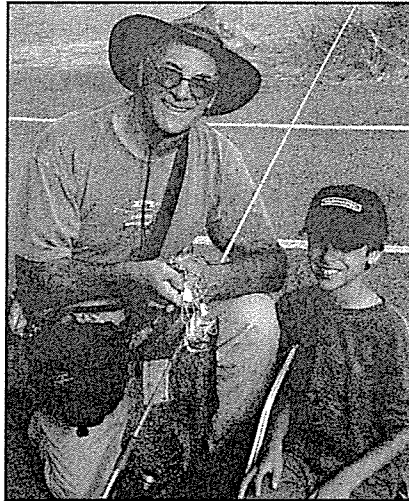
In November 2008, the judge signed an order which allowed the DFG to stock more waters than would have been allowed under an earlier tentative ruling.

According to DFG Director Donald Koch, the DFG fought hard in the negotiations to save its fish-stocking programs.

Of the six DFG regions, planting stopped in 152 waters in the Northern and North-Central regions. The Inland Desert Region (Eastern Sierra) lost only two waters.

A prepared list of waters where stocking will cease is available at www.dfg.ca.gov/news/stocking.

The multimillion-dollar EIR/EIS process is scheduled to be completed by January 2010. □



Although curtailed in certain regions of the state, abundant trout plants are still taking place. Photo by Don Vachini.

Coho Get Help In Russian River

Entering its eighth year, the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program is attempting to re-establish endangered wild coho salmon to the Russian River Basin.

Conducted at Warm Springs

Hatchery, the program continued its success with the spawning of captive-reared wild coho broodstock and the release of 92,000 fingerling coho salmon in 2008.

Established in 2001, the program is a multi-agency collaborative effort that includes local, state and federal agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations.

According to Brett Wilson, DFG senior hatchery supervisor, this innovative program brings together brilliant genetic planning, sophisticated hatchery management techniques and new planting strategies to restore a listed species.

"Approximately 150 females and 150 to 175 males are needed to secure enough fertile eggs for the program annually," said the supervisor.

Wild coho fingerlings are captured in tributaries of the Russian River and spend the rest of their lives in fresh water at the hatchery. Each fish is tagged with a Passive Integrated Transponder, assuring it can be conclusively identified for a genetic selection process for spawning. Genetic information from each fish is used to guide the sophisticated spawning selection process.

Salmon are evaluated weekly and monitored with ultrasound waves to check their readiness for spawning.

Before spawning, the salmon undergo ultrasound viewing to determine their maturation status and are vaccinated to control bacterial kidney disease. Cryogenics are used to preserve genetic material from different year-classes of salmon for future study and use.

"The idea is that they will return as adults to these same streams, spawn and re-establish the wild population," said Ben White, program biologist for the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program.

Of the 92,000 young salmon released into tributaries of the Russian River, most were transported to their new homes in specially designed backpacks which allowed them to be placed in the best quality habitat available and spread over entire reaches of streams. □

By Don Vachini

Wolverines In California?

A research project aimed at collecting data on martens in the Sierra Nevada Mountains captured a picture of a wolverine, an elusive animal thought to have been driven out of California by human activity long ago.

Oregon State University graduate student Katie Moriarty obtained a picture on a motion-and-heat-detecting digital camera. It was set up between Sierraville and Truckee in the northern part of the lengthy mountain range. As part of a project for the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station, she was trying to photograph martens when the image showed on one of her cameras.

"It was not something I would expect by any means," she said. "It was a complete shock."

If the existence of wolverines in the Sierra is confirmed, it could lead to restrictions on logging, road construction and development in critical habitat.

According to Bill Zielinski, a research ecologist for the USFS working with Moriarty, there had been reported wolverine sightings but no solid proof they were still in the Sierra.

Shawn Sartorius, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said the wolverine could either be a long-lost California native, an immigrant from Washington or Idaho or a

captive that had been released into the wild.

If the USFWS confirms the existence of wolverines in the Sierra, it could lead to restrictions on logging, road construction and development in critical habitat.

Since March 2008, at least three confirmed photo sightings have been reported. To check out these photos and updated information, visit www.dfg.ca.gov. —Don Vachini □

State Needs Help From A-Zone Hunters

The DFG is conducting a study on how native wildlife affects E. coli presence in three coastal counties. The study focuses on the bacteria, *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7, which can cause illness and death in humans. The study will help establish if the bacteria is found in wildlife in Monterey, San Benito and San Luis Obispo counties.

The DFG is requesting that hunters who harvest deer in A Zone take a 6-inch segment of the deer's colon to special drop-off locations. Samples need to be kept cool and delivered within three days. There are no known health hazards to hunters collecting a small segment of deer colon when cleaning their deer.

"Hunter cooperation in this study is extremely important to the long-term management of the deer herds moving between foothills and croplands," said

the DFG's Dr. Andrew Gordus.

A special collection kit is available to hunters upon request. It has latex gloves, two zip ties, two gallon-size zip-lock bags, label and instructions. For a description of how to collect the sample while cleaning a deer, go to www.dfg.ca.gov/news/docs/FieldSamplingProtocolForDeerHunters.pdf.

The new study is designed to collect information over a three-year testing period.

Specimen drop-off locations and collection kits are available from:

- Bob Martin, Rio Farms, (831) 595-1554, King City
- Kek Flores, Jackpot Harvesting, (831) 970-7073, Gonzales
- Traci Roberts, Monterey County Farm Bureau, (831) 750-5875, Salinas
- Mike Silva, (831) 595-0102, Salinas
- Monterey Fish and Game Office, (831) 649-2870, Monterey.

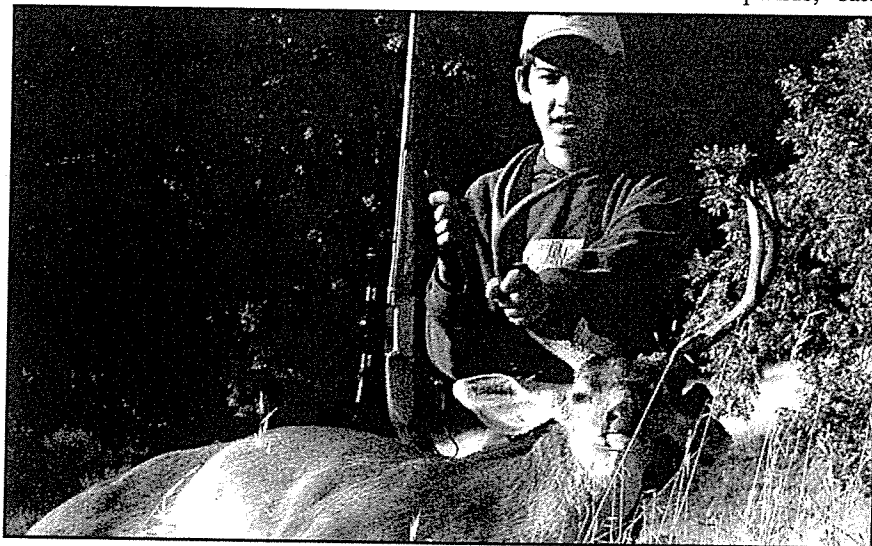
—Don Vachini □

Tips To Avoid Ticks, Lyme Disease

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to avoid black-legged ticks. Here are some tips from the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California.

- Wear light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts so a tick can easily be seen.
- Walk in the center of forest trails.
- Apply repellents with DEET directly onto the skin.
- Inspect clothing and skin regularly when in tick habitat.
- If a tick is imbedded, remove by grasping it at the point of attachment, as close to the skin as possible with fine tweezers. Gently but firmly pull it straight out and apply antiseptic to the bite area. —Don Vachini □

◀ The state is asking A Zone deer hunters in Monterey, San Benito and San Luis Obispo counties to collect parts of harvested deer for a new study it's undertaking. Photo by Don Vachini.



IN THE FIELD

Are You Using The Right Knots?

The moment of truth arrives! You've managed to hook your trophy fish, but angst begins to creep in as the battle wears on. Was the knot tied correctly? More importantly, will it hold?

Indeed, it is a well-known fact that the knot is the weakest point in this connection. All knots reduce the strength of the line to a greater or lesser degree. Any knot that retains 85 percent or more of the line's breaking strength is considered useful. Some of the newer lines approach the 90 percent efficiency rating.

Which are the most efficient knots? Several years ago, Berkley Tackle embarked on a quest to develop the best knot for monofilament lines. Administered by the North American Fishing Club's television show and known as the "Knot Wars" series, literally hundreds of knots and knot variations were tested before Berkley came up with the top dozen or so.

Top knots include the Albright, Arbor, Blood, Dropper Loop, Improved Clinch, Nail, Palomar, Perfecton, Rapala Loop, Snell, Surgeon's Join, Surgeon's Loop, Trilene and Uni knots.

Much of the concern over knot failure can be remedied by learning to tie them correctly, which is easier said than done. While it can be difficult to find an expert who can properly demonstrate how to tie these specific knots, and printed illustrations don't always give three-dimensional information, an interesting Web site called www.animatedknots.com provides an excellent instructional and training tool.

Once a selection is made, the knot automatically ties itself. Fast and slow buttons allow each animation to be replayed, and they can also be reflected left, right or inverted.

The site also offers hints to ensure the integrity of knots, such as using fresh line, storing it out of the sun and using a quality reel with an efficient, smooth-operating drag.

Knots should also be pulled slowly, steadily and tight when being tied and lubricated with a bit of saliva. □

Bats Get Bad Rap

As trick-or-treaters head out on the Halloween, silhouettes or images of bats often adorn costumes or decora-

tions to make wearers appear fearful. In reality, a lot of misinformation exists about these gentle, beneficial creatures of the night.

Bats don't attack people, get in their hair or suck their blood. Like most wildlife, they tend to avoid people.

Neither rodents nor birds, they are mammals of the scientific classification *Chiroptera*, which is Greek for "hand-wing," and make up the second-largest group of mammals worldwide, behind rodents.

Twenty-four species of bats exist in California and all are voracious insect-eaters. Indeed, some species of bats common in California can eat as many as 600 insects an hour, including mosquitoes, beetles and crickets.

In addition to serving as symbols for Halloween costumes and parties, they play an essential role in natural pest control by helping to protect the state's agriculture industry from crop-eating insects.

The big brown bat and Mexican free-tail bats are among the most common species in California.

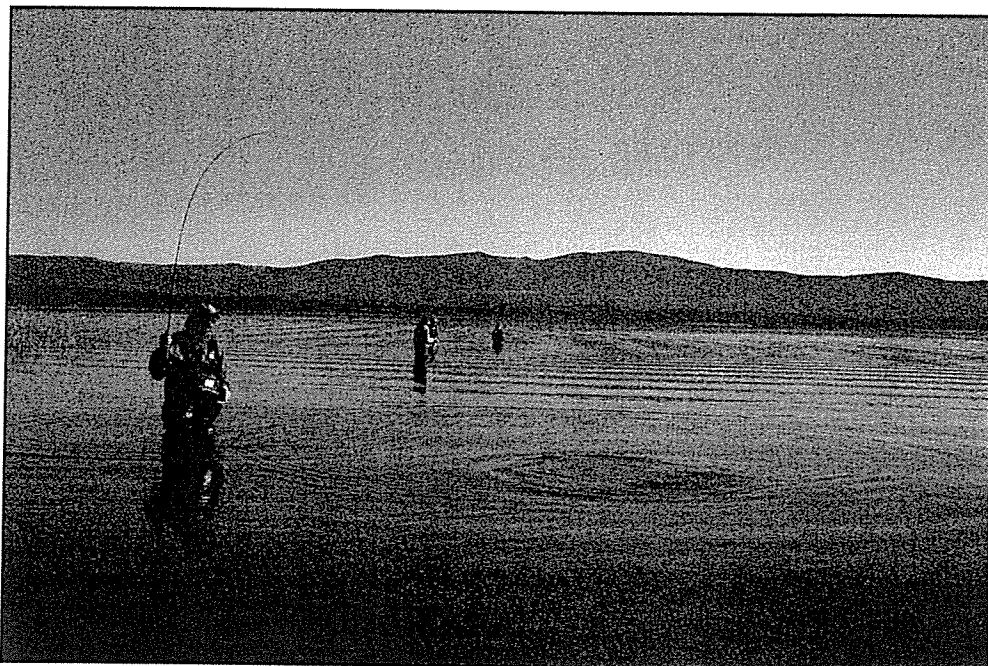
Bats can live up to 20 years, usually producing only one offspring per year. Depending on the species and time of year, they can be found hanging out in groups or individually in caves, mines, crevices, under bridges and in tree hollows.

While the open rafters of older outbuildings are especially attractive for roosting and raising their young, some species are common in established residential neighborhoods.

In recognition of the important role they play in our ecosystem and the declining status of many species, the Department of Fish and Game is working with state bat experts to produce a conservation strategy for the species.

There's enough information on the Internet to drive people batty. The DFG supports these sites: www.dfg.ca.gov/viewing/bats2.html and www.dfg.ca.gov/viewing/bats.html. □

By Don Vachini



Knots are the weakest point in the fish-line-angler connection. Correctly tied knots can improve the odds. Photo by Don Vachini.

IN THE FIELD

Group Celebrates 500,000th Duck Hatchling

While the California Waterfowl Association has restored, protected or enhanced more than 360,000 acres and provided habitat for millions of birds and animals over the past 20 years, one of their more successful endeavors has been the highly popular California Wood Duck Program.

Much of the wood duck's nesting habitat steadily disappearing since the mid-1800s. CWA scientists and members sought to help the colorful duck by formulating a project that provides manmade nesting sites.

Wood ducks prefer slow-moving water with trees or brushy plants nearby. They have webbed feet and sharp toenails for grasping limbs and climbing. Very large eyes, short wings with broad feathers and square tails enable them to maneuver among trees, branches and limbs.

They live near waterways all over the northern part of the state. But the Central Valley seems to be the most important wintering and nesting area for this species, according to Kelly Rathburn, the Wood Duck Program's assistant coordinator.

Supported by grants, donations, state agencies and the sale of wood duck boxes, the WDP is the most extensive volunteer nest-box program in North America. More than 500 active volunteers service 5,000 boxes annually. Under the leadership of CWA biologists, volunteers are trained to construct and install the 23x12x10 5/8-inch plywood boxes.

During the spring nesting season, they check, monitor and record the status of wood ducks present. Hens are banded and tracked via GPS and the collected data is used to help manage the populations.

Rathburn confirms that wood ducks are very adaptive to nest boxes.

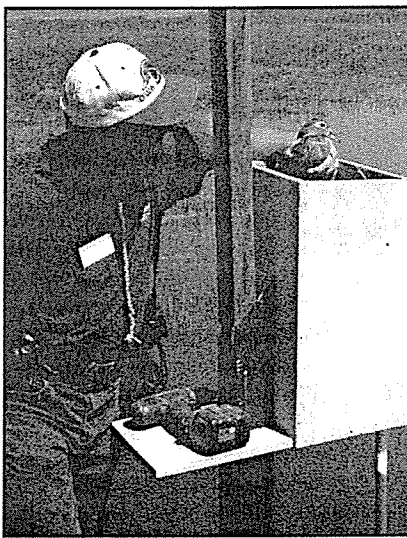
"Females lay one egg per day to a maximum of 15 and, since the WDP's inception in 1991, approximately 30,000 ducklings hatch from these boxes each year. The project recently celebrated its 500,000th hatchling!"

Survival rates are low — roughly 30 percent make it to adulthood. But those that do normally experience a 5- to 6-year life span. Since the advent of manmade nest boxes, populations have rebounded from historic lows, their numbers have risen significantly and stabilized.

An estimated 63,000 are now up around the state.

Rathburn conducts classroom sessions and clinics so youth and adults, hunter and non-hunters can participate in hands-on conservation.

For more information on ways to get involved in this program, visit www.calwaterfowl.org or call (916) 648-1406 ext. 136. □



More than 500 volunteers in the Wood Duck Program maintain 5,000 boxes each year in California. Photo by Don Vachini.

8 Million Chinook Tagged

The Department of Fish and Game's new system tracks 8 million juvenile fall-run chinook salmon raised in Central Valley hatcheries.

Information from coded wire tags implanted in the young fish will be expected to help fisheries managers make decisions regarding California's multi-million dollar commercial and sport salmon fishery.

Information on salmon survival and return is critical to fisheries personnel as they attempt to stop the depletion of Central Valley fall-run chinook stocks. This year's salmon fishing closures of salmon stocks cost the state an estimated \$279 million in lost revenue and 2,690 jobs.

Using four state-of-the-art AutoFish System processing trailers, up to 350,000 young salmon a day were marked and tagged. Spearheaded by the DFG, the cooperative program includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program provided more than \$6.7 million for initial equipment purchases during the first two years of project operations in 2007 and 2008.

During 2009, operational costs of the program were funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Water Resources and the East Bay Municipal Utilities District.

The marking and tagging process took place at the Nimbus Salmon Hatchery in Rancho Cordova along with the Feather River, Mokelumne River and Coleman National Fish hatcheries.

"This important project will produce strategic information on Central Valley salmon," said DFG State Fisheries Manager Neil Manji. "It also provides consistency in helping biologists track harvest rates in the ocean and inland fisheries."

The data collected will be used to calculate the proportion of spawning hatchery and natural fish returning to the Central Valley, which affects season setting and harvest quotas in California's multimillion dollar commercial and sport salmon fishery.

"This collaborative project will yield critical data for improving the long-term management of fall-run chinook," said Manji.

The state met its goal of tagging and releasing 8 million fish. Central Valley hatcheries release more than 32 million fall-run chinook salmon annually. □

By Don Vachini

IN THE FIELD

DFG Plans Extra Trout Plants

As part of a holiday tradition, the Department of Fish and Game is planting additional rainbow trout across California this month — a sort of anglers' Christmas present.

Scheduled to occur during the last three weeks of December, the plants will take place in urban, suburban and rural areas in the Inland Deserts, South Coast and Central California regions.

"The holiday season provides an opportunity for Californians to spend quality time outdoors fishing with their families," said Gary Williams, DFG Inland Deserts region senior hatchery supervisor.

Indeed, the many lakes and reservoirs open year 'round will benefit from various-sized trout infusions. Along with moderate numbers of catchable-sized rainbows (approximately 8-10 inches) and fingerlings stocked as part of a put-and-grow philosophy, the majority of the 'bows will average 11-13 inches and be one pound or more. Occasionally, surplus broodfish up to 3 pounds will augment the shipments.

Overall, DFG hatcheries will plant roughly 7 million rainbow trout in these regions during 2009. For information on scheduled plants by county, contact www.dfg.ca.gov. □

Last-Minute Gifts For Outdoorsmen

Frugal shoppers visiting local outdoor shops, surfing online sites or ordering from catalogs, will find useful gifts for the outdoorsman at bargain prices.

With an obvious eye on the budget, some of the following gift ideas will still brighten the eyes of sportsman of all ages. A wide array of stocking stuffers range from assorted trout and bass lures, snelled hooks, prepared baits, socks, gloves, ammunition,

digital compass, day packs, hands-free headlights to exercise and training apparel and gear.

In addition, outdoor-related magazine subscriptions or renewals of existing ones and pre-paid gift cards for a favorite outdoor store or Web site are all valid choices for under \$50.

Among gifts that keep on giving are books, and some outstanding reading selections are available.

For the fishing enthusiast, author Chris Shaffer's series of "definitive" guidebooks is a must for anglers wishing to expand Golden State horizons. Divided into north, central and southern California, this trio of books is available at www.fishingcalifornia.net.

Author James Swan provides stimulating reading for hunters of all calibers. His most recent book, *Chasing the Hunter's Dream*, is available at www.jamesswan.com.

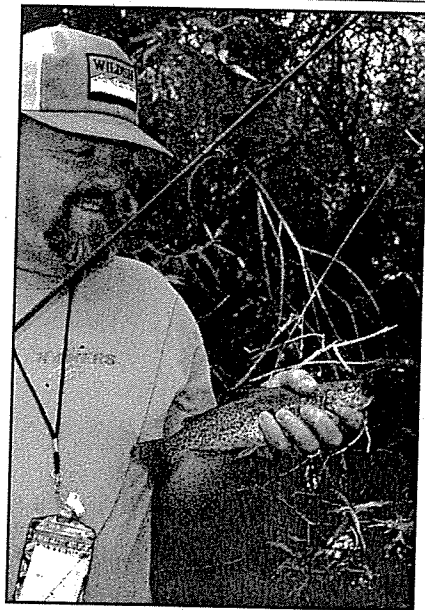
DeLorme Maps has a new *California Atlas & Gazetteer*, which reflects advanced cartographic technology, provides an at-a-glance understanding of the terrain, road network and other geographic features for any Golden State location. Visit www.delorme.com. □

Anglers Need New Licenses

Golden State anglers ringing in the New Year are reminded they need a valid 2010 sport-fishing license to be legal. You now can purchase them online.

"The online purchasing option will make it more convenient for our customers to enjoy California's diverse recreational fishing opportunities," said John McCamman, chief deputy director. "Anyone who has access to the Internet and a printer can get a license 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and be on the way to fish minutes after logging on."

McCamman was instrumental in guiding this sport-fishing license project to completion before the release of the entire Automated License Data



Angler Rick Krieg purchased his two-day license online, printed it and was landing trout within minutes. Photo by Don Vachini.

System.

All resident and non-resident licenses, both annual and short-term, plus selected stamps, can be purchased at www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/ols/intro.html. The purchaser will be able to print out a one-day or two-day license, or a temporary annual license. All licenses will include a security code that will be decipherable by wardens in the field.

All licenses purchased online and printed are valid; annual license purchasers will receive a permanent license in the mail within 10 days. All purchases are payable by credit card.

Also available for online purchase are the Second Rod, Sport Fishing Ocean Enhancement and Bay Delta Enhancement stamps. However, steelhead and abalone report cards must still be obtained from one of the 1,800 authorized license agents throughout the state or at local DFG license sales offices.

Fishing licenses are still available for purchase from authorized license agents and the cost is the same whether purchased online or from a vendor. The DFG will expand the online-ordering system so hunters can purchase licenses as well by 2011. □

By Don Vachini

Upper Klamath Coho Restoration

State and federal officials announced the selection of four restoration projects in the Klamath River watershed. They will be funded through the new Coho Enhancement Fund (CEF) established as part of settlement discussions concerning the re-licensing of PacifiCorp's Klamath River Hydroelectric Project.

To enhance coho salmon habitat, the Scott River Diversion Improvements, the Denny Ditch Fish Screen in the Scott River, the Seiad Creek Channel Reconstruction-Phase I and the Seiad Creek Off-Channel Pond Habitat Construction projects will include installing fish screens and increasing stream flows to significantly benefit endangered fish populations.

— DON VACHINI □

DFG: Trophy Deer Are Hoaxes

An Elk Grove man who claimed to have killed several state-record-class deer is facing several charges of wildlife violations.

According to the California Department of Fish and Game, 29-year-old Coleman Lee Houston purchased deer antlers on eBay, transferred them to another carcass and claimed he killed the deer in El Dorado County in October 2009.

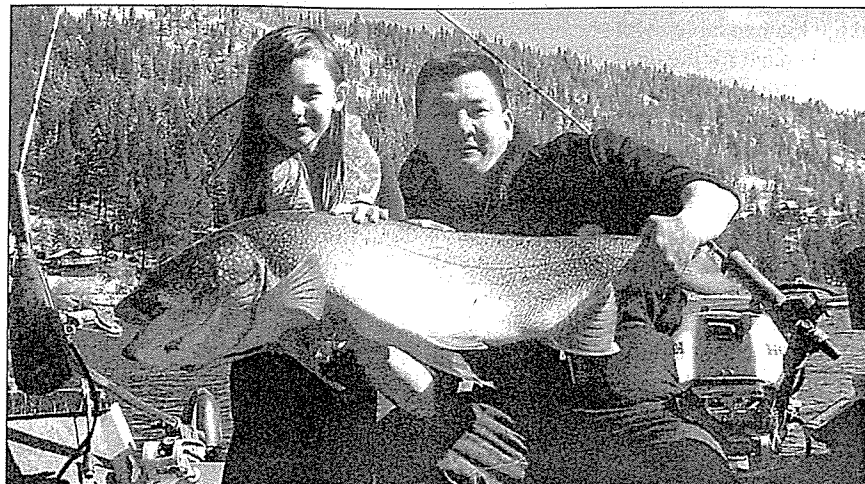
State laws prohibit buying, selling or bartering wildlife parts. If convicted, Houston could face jail time.

"I personally have never seen this kind of elaborate scheme," said Conversation Officer Sean Pirtle, who is leading the investigation. "It blows me away that Coleman would go to these lengths. He did talk up a pretty good story."

Houston had posted photos of the deer on the Internet.

Pirtle grew up in the area where Houston claimed to have killed the deer, and recognized that D5-zone deer with antlers wider than 30 inches were unprecedented.

"At first, I figured he was taking deer in the X zones and slapping D-zone tags on them," Pirtle told *California Game*



Kaitlyn Stout proudly holds her pending Smallfry record 30-pound lake trout. Photo courtesy of IGFA.

Girls Score A Pair For The Books

TULE ELK

Four new world records were recognized during the Pope and Young Club's 26th Biennial Convention and Awards Banquet in Denver, Colorado.

Californian Audrey Goodnight was recognized with the induction of the first official record Tule elk.

Goodnight arrowed her elk (which scored 312 5/8) in California's Solano County in 1990.

Since establishing the category July 1, 2008, the Pope and Young Club has accepted 22 Tule elk entries into its records, with Goodnight's bull topping all entrants.

For information on the Pope and Young Club, contact (507) 867-4144, or www.pope-young.org.

& Fish.

Pirtle filed the case with the Sacramento District Attorney's Office in December.

In addition to these deer, Houston has claimed he shot state-record-sized blacktail deer in 2007 and 2008. The DFG is investigating these stories as well.

In 2008, Houston contacted several publications and organizations about his 2007 and 2008 deer claims. He submitted photos and detailed stories about the animals and hunts. Several record-

MACKINAW TROUT

Divided into male and female divisions, the IGFA's popular junior angler program includes Smallfry (up to age 10) and Junior (age 11-16) categories, opening up record opportunities for youngsters.

On April 3, 2009, young angler Kaitlyn Stout of Spanish Springs, Nevada, made the short trip to California's Donner Lake for a morning of fishing. While deep trolling a homemade lure, she hooked a 30-pound lake trout. The current IGFA female Smallfry mackinaw standard is 20 pounds, 10 ounces set in July 2005 from Michigan's Lake Superior, but Stout's pending specimen should eclipse it by over 9 pounds.

For information about the IGFA's Junior and Smallfry world-record categories, photos of pending records plus other shots, visit www.igfa.org.

— DON VACHINI □

keeping organizations measured his deer and accepted them into their record books.

California Game & Fish magazine published photos and a story about Houston in its September 2009 issue.

Houston has not responded to recent requests for comment from *Game & Fish* magazine. Houston was cooperating with the investigation, said Pirtle.

Updates to this story will be posted at www.californiagameandfish.com.

—STAFF □

Continues on page 56...

College Fishing Teams Increasing

Sonoma State University (SSU) is among a half-dozen Golden State universities that have recently added fishing teams to their intercollegiate sports offerings.

Although not an officially sanctioned NCAA event, the team operates under club status, according to SSU team member Nate Shankles.

Fresno State, San Jose State, Sacramento State, Chico State, Humboldt State, SSU and UC Davis, along with Arizona State, Oregon State, Oregon, Washington State and Nevada Reno, compete in the Western Region of the newly founded National Guard FLW Outdoors College Fishing Circuit (five regions exist nationwide).

FLW Outdoors is named for Forrest L. Woods, the manufacturer of Ranger fishing boats, which are used exclusively on the FLW circuit.

While prize money makes this idea interesting, students also compete for scholarships and a chance to mingle with well-known bass pros. The FLW provides a boat and a driver for each team plus a small travel allotment based on how far the team has to travel. Half the money earned goes to the college, the other half to the fishing club.

Two anglers make up a team and each school can have a maximum of three teams competing at a tournament. Alex Christianson and Alan Kuramura; John Yandell and Corey Sheehan and Jared Biddle and Nate Shankles make up the three-team Sonoma State Fishing Club.

A maximum of 40 teams may be entered at each of the four qualifying divisional tournaments held among the five regions, with the top five places automatically entered in their regional tournament where the top team receives \$5,000 with their corresponding schools receiving a matching amount. Awards extend through fifth place at each of these tournaments.

The Christianson/Kuramura team placed third in the tournament at Lake

Oroville (claiming \$4,000), and the Biddle/Shankles team finished in the top 10 at both Clear Lake and Lake Roosevelt events. After participating in the preliminaries, all three SSU teams qualified for the regional championship tournament and earned a chance to reach the Nationals.

The Western Regional Championships were held at Buckley Cove Park in Stockton on Sept. 19-21. To determine the five finalists, entrants were eliminated by additional qualifiers. After three days, the team of Glen Wyatt and Eric Anderson from San Jose State claimed the 2009 title. In addition to \$25,000, the winners received a Ranger 177TR bass boat for their club, painted in their school colors plus \$25,000 for the school.

At the three-day Nationals, the winning team will receive a boat plus \$50,000 (plus \$50,000 for the school) and will automatically be entered in the Forest Wood Cup, a pro tournament. For that event, the team member with the heaviest total will compete in the Pro Division; the other member will compete in the Co-Angler Division. First prize in that contest will be one million dollars with the money going directly to the individual who earns it.

To gain additional information, view video or check results, visit the Web sites www.collegefishing.com or www.FLWOutdoors.com. □



Sonoma State's Corey Sheehan hoists a 4-pound bass from Clear Lake during a qualifying tournament. ■ Photo courtesy of SSU Fishing Club.

30 Scholarships Designed To Aid Game Wardens

The California Game Wardens Foundation (GWF) has awarded 30 scholarships, which in the aggregate are worth a total of \$35,000, to 26 children, three spouses and one game warden for the 2009-2010 school year.

The California GWF was founded in 2007 by a small group of Californians who are concerned with the enforcement of the state's environmental and resource laws. Game wardens are the first line of enforcement of the laws that protect the state's diverse and vital resources.

The 30 recipients are either going to attend college, continue with their college educations, take special classes to upgrade their skills or attend trade schools. "We had a great group of applicants, all of whom are dedicated young men and women with strong records of community service, academic achievement and leadership. These recipients represent a solid cross-section of our future leaders," said Judd Hanna, GWF Chairman. "The Board of Directors applauds all of them and bids them success in all of their future endeavors."

GWF scholarships are made possible by donations to the foundation's Principal Fund from sportsmen and sportswomen, landowners, conservationists and other citizens who care about the diminishing natural resources.

"The mission of the GWF is to provide financial benefits and citizen support to game wardens and their families," said Ned Spieker, a founding member of the organization. "We welcome new members as we strive to raise our second million dollars by the end of 2010."

For more information, visit www.theGWF.org, or call (650) 234-1305. □

BY DON VACHINI

DFG Adds 'Map It' Feature

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has unveiled a new feature on its Web site that allows anglers to better scout out prime trout fishing spots. The new "Map It" feature at www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Hatcheries/FishPlanting links the weekly trout stocking schedule for bodies of water throughout the state to Google Maps, providing directions and other pertinent information to anglers who are planning fishing trips.

"The scheduled fish plant pages are now receiving more hits than any other section of our Web site," said Walt Beer, DFG's Statewide Hatchery Coordinator. "This is proving to be a wonderful one-stop planning tool for anglers who want to maximize their chances for a good day of fishing."

Beer added that numerous anglers have praised the DFG for the addition of the Fish Stocking "Map It" page which complements the "Online Fishing Guide," another popular map-based Web page that provides a broad range of information about California fishing opportunities. This page, at www.dfg.ca.gov/fishingpassport/guide.asp, lists the services and facilities available at various fishing locations, as well as a general description of the terrain and species available. In addition, anglers can also call the Fish Stocking hotline in each region to hear recorded information about stocking schedules:

Region 1: (530) 225-2146

Region 2: (916) 351-0832

Region 3: (707) 944-5581

Region 4: (559) 243-4005 x 183

Regions 5 and 6: (562) 594-7268

Fish stocking information is updated regularly, both online and on the hotlines, and is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. □

Young Artists Honored

Wildlife Forever recently announced the California winners of its 2009 State Fish Art Contest. Winning

entries from each state were selected by judges in three grade categories: 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. All 108 winning artists from across the country were personally honored at Mall of America in Minnesota in celebration of the 2009 Wildlife Forever State Fish Art Contest and their winning fish artwork. Golden State students Kali Lu of San Jose (Grades 4-6), Yiyi Zhang of Pleasanton (Grades 7-9) and Daniel Kun of Northridge (Grades 10-12) claimed honors for their artwork. Zhang was further honored when her state winner was selected Second Place-Best of Show in grades 7-9.

Located in Brooklyn Center, MN, Wildlife Forever is a non-profit, multi-species conservation organization dedicated to conserving America's wildlife heritage. Sponsors for the State Fish Art Contest include The Art Institutes International Minnesota, Mall of America, Minnesota Twins, North American Fishing Club, Rapala, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Region. For entry forms or additional information, visit the Web site at www.statefishart.com. □

Licenses On Display?

The Fish and Game Commission has proposed the elimination of the need for anglers to display their fishing license in full sight above the waist while fishing. While the original intent of this requirement enacted in 1994 was to target unlicensed anglers, boost license sales and make it easier for law enforcement officers to view licenses from a distance, this endeavor proved to be a major hardship on anglers in the field. Many were inadvertently left on other items of clothing, lost or accidentally damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, compiled statistics have revealed that it has not increased license revenues as originally intended. In addition, the recent introduction of stamps and tags, such as the Bay Delta Enhancement stamp, abalone, sturgeon and steelhead re-

port cards, plus others, make it necessary for wardens to establish personal contact to verify anglers have them. Currently, there are five report cards and four stamps that are required for certain areas and species that must accompany the basic license if applicable. The current law will remain in effect until it is officially removed. For updated information on regulations, check this page out on the Web: www.fgc.ca.gov/regulations/new/2009/proposedregs09.asp. □

Shasta Irrigators Praised

The DFG commended Shasta River irrigators for their recent timely action to protect chinook salmon by voluntarily reducing or ceasing legal water diversions during the 2009 irrigation season. This action allowed more than 1,000 chinook salmon congregated in the lower portion of the Shasta River to successfully continue their spawning run.

It became apparent to fisheries biologists monitoring the 2009 fish count on the lower Shasta that September's low flows, warm weather, high predation rates and the potential for disease were threatening the year's already-fragile spawning run. "Once irrigators were notified of the situation, many responded without hesitation," said DFG Senior Fishery Biologist Mark Pisano. "Although they could have continued their legal water diversions upstream, some chose to release more water to aid the fish holding in the canyon, minimizing the potential for a major fish die-off."

Water diversions in the upper river are governed by the Shasta River Decree No. 7035, whereby irrigation is allowed from April 1 through Oct. 1 each year. Water rights holders are not legally required to alter their operations to assist the fish runs. However, their voluntary decisions contributed an estimated 13 cubic feet per second to the river flow. □

BY DON VACHINI

Will San Joaquin Salmon Return?

Environmentalists and fishermen alike have been reeling under the collapse of the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Chinook salmon runs during the past three years.

Once estimated at around 100,000 fish, the completion of Friant Dam on the San Joaquin River in 1949 signaled the demise of the Chinook on this watershed. While water filled massive Millerton Lake above the dam, the 60 mile-stretch of river below, serving as the boundary between Fresno and Madera counties, was dewatered in favor of irrigating farmland.

Over six decades later, water is again flowing, rekindling hopes of returning at least a fraction of the famed San Joaquin run of salmon. Commercial and recreational fishermen, as well as environmentalists, brought a lawsuit against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation over the dewatering of the San Joaquin. The lengthy and bitterly fought court battle pitted water for salmon versus farmers' needs to maintain their crops.

Signed into legislation by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the first trickle of water was released during October, 2009 as part of staged flow increases which will re-water the previously dry section of riverbed. October flows were at the 350 cfs rate and increased to 700 cfs during November and on through the winter. Additional flows were adjusted for wintertime flood control measures, and in February, flows were increased to 1600 cfs. The intent is to see how much water seeps into the streambed and how much reaches downstream.

Doug Obeji led the Natural Resources Defense Council's legal battle to allow the San Joaquin to flow again and hopes this infusion of water will eventually lead to the restoration of the river's once prodigious salmon run. "Conservative estimates are that it should support an annual run of 30,000 Chinook.

Obviously, the restoration of the San Joaquin salmon runs, while only 30 percent of the historical numbers, is a correction of a misallocation of a precious resources that never should have been allowed to happen in the first place." □

Californians Win International Trap-Shooting Competition

A pair of California youths recently tested their shooting skills at an international competition in Canada and claimed championships in two divisions.

Michael Flores of Sacramento and Jake Wallace of Castaic, competed in the 2009 Canadian Olympic Shotgun Championships held in Vancouver, British Columbia. At the conclusion of the two-day event, Flores claimed the Junior Open title, while Wallace captured the Men's Open Division championship. Both young men are California State Olympic Shotgun Champions.

Flores, in his third season shooting Olympic trap, won the Golden State title in March 2009. He discovered the sport at an event held by the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance (COHA). Today, COHA sponsors his Olympic ambitions.

Wallace is a member of the USA Junior Olympic Team and currently competes at the collegiate level for Lindenwood University of St. Charles, Missouri.

Flores was excited about the opportunity to participate in the prestigious Canadian Nationals. "Measuring my skills against those of the international competitors was a bonus," he said.

Olympic trap is commonly known as international trap or bunker. The sport utilizes bunkers with 15 machines, which launch clay pigeons at more than 70 miles per hour.

For more information, visit the COHA website at www.outdoorheritage.org. □

Additional Waters To Be Stocked

During October 2006, Pacific Rivers Council and Center for Biological Diversity sued the DFG over fish stocking programs it has engaged in for more than 100 years, because no Environmental Impact Report (EIR) had been completed for the programs.

The central issue was a broad prohibition against stocking non-native fish in any freshwater body of water where an EIR has not been conducted. The litigants claimed the stocking operation didn't comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and harms sensitive populations of native fish and amphibians sharing the waterways.

The result of the case was a court order requiring the DFG to complete an EIR by 2008. Due to delays in the process, which involved combining the EIR with a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the DFG and the petitioners agreed on terms for how and where DFG may continue stocking fish during the time it was preparing the EIR/EIS.

Created in November 2008, the original list took about 20% of the state's waterways off the planting schedule. While it was noted that the list would most likely fluctuate as new information was received, a January 2010 deadline for completion was imposed.

The accumulated information was forwarded to Sacramento for review and the input served to determine whether or not to put the site back on the planting list. As a result, the DFG recently announced revisions to include an additional 21 bodies of water added to the list of stocked waters and 44 water bodies to the list of waters that will not be stocked.

Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Marin, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Riverside, Siskiyou, and San Luis Obispo counties were the recipients of added stocking sites.

To view specific additions and deletions to the newly-updated list of stocked waters, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/news/stocking. □

BY DON VACHINI

Combat "Nature Deficit Disorder"

Renowned Canadian artist and naturalist Robert Bateman wants California's youth to get to know the flora and fauna in their local neighborhoods.

Alarmed by recent surveys, studies and anecdotes clearly demonstrating that urban youth are now spending little or no time outside, Bateman launched the Robert Bateman Get to Know Program based on his belief that "...caring for this planet begins with getting to know our neighbors of other species."

Four national organizations — the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation and the Children & Nature Network — announced their partnership with the Get to Know Program. Working in partnership with additional California-based partners, these five organizations are inviting youth to get outdoors and share their experience with others by submitting photography, art or writing to the Get to Know Contest.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has welcomed the program, saying, "California is home to some of the most beautiful natural wonders in the world.... I applaud your commitment to a healthy lifestyle and your efforts to encourage others to spend more time enjoying nature."

Abigail Kimbell, chief of the U.S. Forest Service, says she believes so many of today's children are growing up disconnected from nature, missing opportunities to develop a personal connection with the resources that sustain us all.

"The negative effects it has on the physical and mental health of our children is a serious and pervasive problem.... The Get to Know Program is exceptional in its vision, scope and in its potential to bring kids to nature and nature to kids. The Forest Service is honored to be a partner in this important program."

Visit www.gettoknow.ca for contest information. □

Dog-Rattlesnake Awareness Clinics

Canines of all breeds and sizes, including hunting dogs, are curious by nature, especially in areas unfamiliar to them; thus, hikers, bird watchers and hunters who own dogs and visit areas prone to housing rattlesnakes run a high risk of having their dogs bitten by the poisonous vipers.

While adult humans share a fear or respect for snakes and give them a wide berth, dogs, on the other hand, can be more curious and fearless. In fact, it is a dog's sense of smell that invariably gets them into trouble. They often stick their nose up close to any living (or non-living) thing to get a better sniff and, in doing so, expose their face at close range.

Several statewide training sessions are available that specialize in rattlesnake avoidance training for hunting dogs. Certified avoidance trainer Patrick Callaghan utilizes a safe and humane way of teaching dogs to stay away from the scent, sight and noise of rattlesnakes. Each dog is individually trained by a low level of electronic stimulation that is carefully applied to each dog's temperament, personality and characteristics. Training is done using live, defanged and muzzled rattlesnakes in a controlled environment for the dog's safety. For additional information or to register for a session, visit www.patrickcallaghan.com.

Extremely stealthy in their habitat, California rattlesnakes carry a deadly venom with both hemotoxic and neurotoxic elements. While hemotoxic compounds cause internal hemorrhaging, damage and destroy skin tissue and red blood cells, and affect the circulatory system, neurotoxic components immobilize the nervous system and affects the victims breathing.

If your dog is bitten, the safest and most feasible plan is to get your dog to a vet as soon as possible. While field treatment is controversial, most medical personnel recommend against ice on the bite, tourniquets, electric shock or incisions on the wound. □

Alpers Trout Find New Home

Renowned Mono County fish culturist Tim Alpers has augmented trout stocking by the California Department of Fish and Game for nearly 2 decades with his specially reared rainbows that are prized for their well-defined fins, massive size and pugnacity. Thus, when he shut down his hatchery and sold his Owens River Ranch property at the end of the 2007 season, many feared his "signature trout of the Eastern Sierra" would disappear.

Simply known as "Alpers trout," most fish delivered by his hatchery varied from 2 to 4 pounds, and a significant portion of the fish ranged between 5 and 6 pounds. Plenty of 8- to 10-pounders were also discreetly dispersed among Mono and Inyo county waters, helping to spike tourism.

However, due to an innovative and unique arrangement with the County of Mono, the operation changed locations, its infrastructure was adjusted, and it never really skipped a beat. What is new is that trout-rancher Alpers, John Frederickson and Steven Brown established the Inland Aquaculture Group (IAG) and partnered with the Mono County Fisheries Commission to initiate a one-of-a-kind trout-rearing facility at 1,037-acre Conway Ranch, located 7 miles north of Lee Vining.

The 3-year-old Conway Ranch Foundation facility includes 220 acres of BLM land and, according to Alpers, utilizes the abundant, nutrient-rich waters of Wilson Creek, a key Mono Lake tributary.

"We've got water, land and gravity, and are really excited about the production capacity of our operation," Alpers said. "Our first priority is to remain in the market of growing and selling Alper's-strain rainbows in Mono County."

Working in cooperation with the CA DFG, the group's current aim is to produce up to 45,000 pounds of heavyweight stocker trout for the 2010 season.

In addition to featuring a catch-and-release float tube pond, a kids-

Continues on page 56...

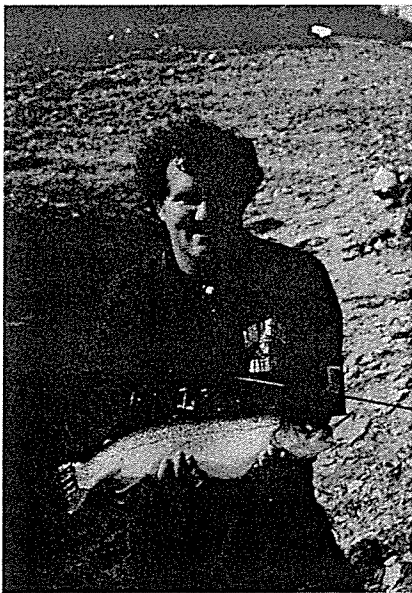
...Continued from page 13

only trout pond and a fly fishing-only section for non-tubers, future plans include growing brown trout, Lahontan cutthroat and disease-resistant Hofer rainbow trout. Future long-range plans also include monitoring California sportfishing, while creating the Conway Ranch Enhancement Program, June Lake Cage Culture Program, Gull Lake Cutthroat Enhancement, and the Alpers Trophy Trout Program. The ranch will also include hatchery production facilities, a whirling-disease research station for Hofer trout, as well as a native cutthroat-trout production system and brood-stock program.

Alpers is pleased that IAG's multi-concept facility has a far-sighted goal of improving the Eastern Sierra trout experience.

"Besides fish farming, a focus on conservation and environmental education will be the objective of our planned interpretive center. Here, we hope to develop intern programs on aquaculture and recreational resources," he remarked.

For additional information or to make a reservation, call (760) 709-6446. □



Although a significant portion of Alpers trout fall between 2 and 6 pounds, plenty of 8- to 10-pounders are dispersed among Mono County waters. ■ Photo by Don Vachini.

Peregrine Falcon De-Listed

The California Fish and Game Commission (CA FGC) recently voted to remove the American peregrine falcon from California's endangered species list.

The DFG recommended the delisting of *Falco peregrinus anatum* based on long-term monitoring data showing an increased breeding population, re-occupation of most of its historic breeding range in California, and a reduction in the threats that led to the listing. Its decline was attributed in part to contamination by the pesticide DDT, which resulted in thin eggshells that broke under the pressure of incubating adults. Human disturbance at the few remaining nesting sites was another known threat to peregrines at the time of listing.

When this falcon was listed as endangered in 1971, only an estimated 10 nesting pairs existed in the state. An ambitious captive breeding and re-introduction program – developed by the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game and other cooperators – successfully re-established the peregrine at historic nest sites and facilitated the release of more than 1,000 hatchery-reared specimens. Currently, it has met or even exceeded historic population numbers in California and today re-occupies most of its historic habitat.

"The recovery of the peregrine falcon in California has been a monumental conservation achievement and one that I am extremely proud and honored to have been a part of during my time at Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group," said biologist Brian Latta, who also serves as executive director of The Bird Group. "It took about 35 years to reverse the damage done by 25 years of DDT contamination in California."

The Commission's decision must be reviewed by the Office of Administrative Law before the species can be officially removed from the

Endangered Species list.

For more information about this and other non-game wildlife, visit the CA DFG website at www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame. □

Sonoma Valley Grad Earns Scholarly Honors

Sonoma Valley High School graduate Gerrit Van Sickle has been awarded the first ever Bouverie Scholarship from the Audubon Canyon Ranch.

Van Sickle has volunteered at the Bouverie Preserve of Audubon Canyon, located near Glen Ellen, since the 5th grade.

The scholarship was established in honor of the late Phyllis Ellman, a longtime ranch board member and "founding mother" of the Bouverie Preserve Environmental Education Program.

"Van Sickle not only helped us with our nature walks and research projects but also mentored and motivated younger students," said Jeanne Wirka, resident biologist at the preserve. "I can think of no more worthy young man than Gerrit to receive the first David Bouverie Scholarship."

The \$1,500 scholarship will help support his pursuit of a degree in environmental studies. Since graduating, Van Sickle has completed an environmental internship at Echo Hill Outdoor School in Maryland, where he served as an instructional assistant. He also participates in a Wildlands Studies program in New Zealand.

Audubon Canyon Ranch is not affiliated with the National Audubon Society but is an independent, non-profit organization overseeing the Cypress Grove Research Center on Tomales Bay and the 1,000 acre Bolinas Lagoon Preserve near Stinson Beach in addition to the 535 acre Glen Ellen site. □

BY DON VACHINI

Recovery For Paiute Cutthroat

An East Fork Carson River tributary is the ancestral home to the Paiute cutthroat, arguably the rarest trout in the world. Currently, both California and federal wildlife agencies are involved in an effort to return this indigenous species to its historic range.

Historically, the Lahontan cutthroat was the sole trout inhabitant of the vast Carson River drainage. Approximately 5,000 years ago, a population of Lahontans became isolated between a series of impassible waterfalls on Silver King Creek in Alpine County and, during the post-glacial centuries, evolved into separate sub-species. Here, the Paiute maintained its genetic integrity until the late 1800s when settlers stocked rainbows in the 6-mile stretch of creek below Llewellyn Falls, compromising their genetically pure status.

However, by a twist of fate, Basque shepherds transplanted Paiutes in the previously barren 3-mile stretch of creek above the falls prior to this planting, providing a genetically pure pool of trout which still exists today.

Silver King Creek, upstream from the falls, has been closed to angling for decades to protect this delicate population. The Paiute was declared endangered in 1970 but was upgraded to threatened status in 1975.

During 2009, the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the US Forest Service, released a draft joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for a proposed project to restore this rare trout species within the Silver King Creek drainage. The proposal includes the removal of non-native fish from Llewellyn Falls downstream to Silver King Canyon, as well as removing non-native fish from the accessible reaches of three small tributaries — Tamarack Creek, Tamarack Lake Creek and the lower reaches of Coyote Valley Creek. Methods being considered for removal include the application of rotenone, electro-fishing or a combination of both.

Once voided of fish, pure-strain

Paiutes will then be re-introduced here. When completed, the project would extend their distribution to a total of 9 miles, essentially doubling the number of adult fish in the watershed and enhancing the future genetic viability of the trout.

After stable, self-sustaining populations are firmly established, the CA DFG wants to open a section of creek to limited, non-consumptive angling, giving fishermen a chance to hook into a species of trout that few on the planet have ever laid eyes on!

For more info on the proposed project, go online to www.fws.gov/nevada or www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/WildTrout/WT_Paiute/WT_PaiuteCutDocs.asp. □

SCA Activities

A nationwide, non-profit conservation force of college and high-school volunteers helps protect and restore America's parks, forests, refuges, seashores and communities.

For more than 52 years, the Student Conservation Association (SCA) has been dedicated to connecting young people of all backgrounds to the land around them and instilling an ethic of stewardship and citizenship to help guide a diverse new generation.

During summer 2009, a trail crew enrolled in the Forestry Program at Reedley Community College in Reedley, completed a 60-day trail maintenance project on the Sierra National Forest. The 9-person crew conducted backcountry trail work on the Florence Lake Trail, an entry point into the John Muir Wilderness Area for both hikers and pack trains.

Funding for 2010 projects has again been secured through the USDA Forest Service and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The SCA has recruited high-school students for summer trail crews on the Klamath, Tahoe and Plumas national forests, working with local high-school employment offices in the Yreka, Quincy and Truckee areas. Crewmembers serve 30 to 60 days and earn \$9 an hour for their service.

The Klamath National Forest crew

is working in the Russian Wilderness; the crew on the Tahoe National Forest is spending 60 days in the Granite Chief Wilderness; and the Plumas National Forest crew is serving in Feather River Canyon. Additional funded projects include a two-year, comprehensive effort on the Pacific Crest Trail in partnership with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Pacific Crest Trail Association; and college-age trail crews on the El Dorado and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests in the Sierra Nevada.

As in previous years, work crews are utilizing on-site logs and rocks to install waterbars, rock steps and rock retaining walls, as well as constructing elevated rock causeways through fragile sites to protect habitat and control runoff and erosion. In addition, trail corridors are being brushed and windfalls are being removed.

According to Jay Watson, western regional director for the SCA, the Pacific Southwest Region of the US Forest Service is playing an important role in creating jobs for these students on their national forests, and SCA is thrilled to have partnered with them on these backcountry trail projects.

"It is good for the land, good for the public and provides summer employment to community college students facing economic pressures," Watson said.

For more information about the Student Conservation Association, visit the organization online at www.thesca.org. □

Summertime Dog Training

The heat of summer brings with it both discomfort and danger to hunting dogs. Indeed, outdoorsmen who train, hunt or exercise their dogs during the summer months need to take precautions to prevent their animals from experiencing heat exhaustion.

According to noted dog trainer, Grady Istre of Reibar Kennels (www.reibar.com) near Lompoc, owners should carefully monitor their canine's

Continues on page 56...

IN THE FIELD

...Continued from page 12

behavior and be attentive to labored breathing, a wobbling gait or a fully extended tongue.

"The ideal situation is to stop activity before your dog reaches these dangerous levels," Istre advised.

For training hunting dogs in the field during summer months, Istre said a few essentials are critical to the animals' well being:

- A daily supply of fresh water in large amounts should be kept in a shaded area. A large bucket may prove more efficient than a bowl. Sprinklers or a small baby pool are other methods of providing water.
- Shade is another vital need. Plan to take shade beaks to provide adequate shelter from the beating sun and to help foster cooling-down.
- When temps and humidity reach stifling levels, cut the outing short. Early-morning/late-evening hours are ideal for exercising your dog.
- Summertime grooming and bathing is another way to greatly reduce skin problems associated with heat.
- Do not leave the dog inside a car even for a few minutes. □

DFG Plans 2010 Youth Hunts

With an eye to the future, the California Department of Fish and Game continues to sponsor special youth hunts throughout the state solely for young or beginning hunters. These popular junior hunts not only offer a chance to pursue pheasant and duck at selected venues but provide various levels of instruction, as well.

Permits for these youth hunts will be issued by drawing. Eligible youths must have successfully completed a hunter-education course, possess a valid Resident Junior Hunting License and be 15 years of age or younger for the duck hunts (stamps not required), and 16 years or younger for the pheasant hunts.

Dates for the hunts are typically planned for November. Junior hunters interested in obtaining a permit for

a specific hunt must apply in writing on a standard postal service-size postcard listing name, mailing address, telephone number, 2010-2011 Junior Hunting License number, name of adult chaperone, desired hunt (morning or afternoon) and second choice of preferred hunting. Hunters may also apply on the CA DFG website or download, print and mail an application form available at www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/hunting/uplandgame/gamebird/specialhunts. Successful applicants will be notified by mail.

One adult, 18 years of age or older who may not hunt but must have a hunting license, is required to accompany and supervise every two junior hunters. Applicants should specify if a chaperone is needed. For more information, call your local office of the CA DFG or visit the agency's website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/about/hunting>.

The CA DFG also sponsors a variety of hunters' clinics through the Apprentice Hunts organization. Taking the hunter beyond the basic hunter-education course, the organization focuses on the basics of hunting with the goal for developing ethical, conservation-minded, successful hunters through education. Among these are two specific youth-oriented programs run by California Waterfowl; a youth summer shooting program, including shotgun practice and archery shooting; and youth hunts from October through January. Check the Outdoor Opportunities section in the free California Hunting Digest: Big Game 2010 book for clinic dates and information.

Helping California outdoorsmen of all ages continue enjoying available hunting experiences, some research is often necessary to determine options prior to heading afield. Filled with harvest stats, news items and special hunting opportunities, the California Hunting Digest is a must-have, comprehensive resource for hunters seeking available hunting destinations. It is available through most CA DFG offices and independent license agents or online via download at www.dfg.ca.gov/about/hunting/.

In addition to libraries and county assessors offices, the Public Lands

Information Center (www.publiclands.org) offers a database of every statewide public land that allows hunting. □

Top Sites For Wildlife Viewing

The Golden State is blessed with hundreds of sites for viewing wildlife. Here are just a few:

Visitors to Ano Nuevo State Park in Pescadero can observe male elephant seals or small pups learning to survive. Guided beach walks are available with reservations well in advance. For more information, call the park office at (800) 444-4445 or visit the park's website at www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=523.

James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in Moss Beach showcases harbor seals, plus passing whales and dolphins and its tide pools feature urchins, crabs and starfish. Bird species include egrets, pelicans, herons, cormorants, gulls and hawks. For more information, call (650) 728-3584 or visit the reserve's website at www.fitgeraldreserve.org.

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area in Butte County offers sightings of waterfowl of every description. During winter skies often fill with ducks and snow geese, while sandhill cranes and raptors are also plentiful. For more information, call the site office at (530) 846-7505 or visit the website at www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/wa/regions.

At Lands End Coastal Trail in San Francisco, sea lions and seals bask on coastal rocks while gulls, pelicans and red-tailed hawks often swoop among them. For more information, call the trail office at (415) 561-4323 or visit the trail website at www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/lands-end.html.

While birds of many species exist at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Orick, the elk are the feature attraction. They are often reliably present in the glades and short grass along the highway. For more information, call the park headquarters at (707) 465-7354 or visit the park website at www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=415. □

BY DON VACHINI

Workshops Build Growth For Outdoors Women

As more and more opportunities become available for women who want to explore the outdoors, a handful of organizations are emerging to provide guidance, instruction and camaraderie.

One group in particular — Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, California (BOW-CA) — is a non-profit organization dedicated to offering opportunities to learn outdoor skills in a safe, encouraging and supportive environment.

According to BOW-CA president Susan Herrgesell, instruction is given in one-, two- or three-day workshops with valuable hands-on experiences. The workshops are designed to foster the learning process and provide the opportunity for women to enjoy the outdoors, while encouraging and empowering them to build their self-confidence in the outdoors and in life's adventures. "The new friendships, the laughter and the renewed self-esteem are all for free," she adds.

Marking its fifth year in California, the organization has posted its 2010 schedule of events on its newly designed website at www.bowca.org. The outdoor skills workshops cater to the beginner or intermediate outdoors-woman and all equipment is provided so the participant doesn't have to invest in equipment before they know if they want to pursue that particular outdoor skill. Topic-specific workshops include fly fishing, trap shooting and sporting clays, riding ATVs and dirt bikes, outdoor cooking, wildlife and nature drawing, using hiking poles for hiking and coastal exploration, and a guided pheasant hunt.

While many sessions have already taken place, a pair of late-season options still exist. For example, a three-day multi-course workshop, scheduled for October 22-24 at the Wonder Valley Ranch in Fresno County, covers introductions to kayaking, map and compass, GPS, personal self-defense, trap shooting, fly-fishing, fly-

tying, hiking poles, archery, first-aid, camping and backpacking, outdoor and Dutch oven cooking, knot tying and more. Limited to 100 participants at a cost of \$395, it also includes two nights at the ranch, seven meals, four outdoor skills sessions, all equipment, raffles, auctions and entertainment.

On Nov. 20, 2010, a guided pheasant hunt will take place on the Wilderness Unlimited property located in Williams, in Colusa County. Limited to 25 participants, the cost is \$125.

For information about any of the following workshops, visit www.bowca.org or phone Herrgesell at (530) 347-0227. □

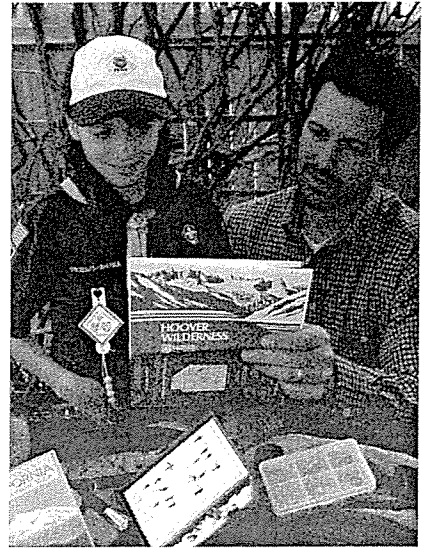
Scout Patches Encourage Angling, Boating

California Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts now have the opportunity to achieve three new patches, all intended to help them increase their participation in recreational angling and boating.

Take Me Fishing, the boating and fishing communities' national campaign, recently introduced the Scouting Patch Program. Three new boating and fishing patches promote the merits of the sport and encourage them to plan and organize fishing trips using the resources found online at TakeMeFishing.org.

"We are thrilled to announce the Scouting Patch Program to introduce more youth to the fun and excitement of boating and fishing," said Frank Peterson, president and CEO for Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF). "All three patches promote the merits of boating and fishing and create a deeper appreciation for the outdoors. We want to inspire newcomers to get active and develop leadership qualities to ultimately protect the legacy of the sport and the future of our nation's waterways."

RBFF is a nonprofit organization. Its mission is to protect and restore the nation's aquatic natural resources



Attempting to earn his First Catch Patch, Boy Scout Domenic Vachini is organizing a real-life fishing trip with his dad, Chris. Photo by Don Vachini.

es by helping people discover, share and protect the legacy of boating and fishing through national outreach programs.

According to the Special Report recently conducted by RBFF and the Outdoor Foundation, fishing is the most popular gateway activity that often leads to participation in other outdoor pursuits. The report also found that almost 79 percent of youth participants, ages 6 to 12, are driven by a desire for fun; and nearly 51 percent hold interests in exploring the natural world. Past research shows that 90 percent of adult outdoor enthusiasts were introduced to nature-based activities between the ages of 5 and 18.

Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, ages 6 to 11, can earn the Passport Patch by completing an introductory six-step program that teaches various skills to be knowledgeable, safe and confident while boating and fishing. The Passport to Fishing and Boating Program is recognized by the Boy Scouts of America for excellence in aquatic education.

Scouts ages 6 to 11 can earn the First Catch Patch by organizing a real-life fishing trip; while Scouts ages 12 to 17 can claim the Mentor Patch by organizing a fishing trip for newcomers to the sport. This patch helps

Continues on page 56...

...Continued from page 12

develop leadership qualities and introduces someone new to boating and fishing.

"Because incentive-driven patches are an integral, exciting component in Scout subculture, we are certain that this program offers the perfect formula for promoting fishing, boating and conservation," said J. Warren Young, publisher of Boy's Life and Scouting magazines. Troop leaders can obtain more information in the Jan-Feb 2010 issue of Scouting magazine. To register for the patches, visit www.TakeMeFishing.org/Scouts. □

Owl Warnings For Pet Owners

Several alarming incidents, involving vanishing cats and dogs, have occurred in both rural and urban areas of Sonoma County. While pet owners remain baffled as to their disappearance, county officials have a pretty good lead toward identifying the perpetrators.

Recently, a Santa Rosa woman reported letting three of her Chihuahuas out in her small backyard prior to bedtime. Within seconds, one dog was yelping and bleeding with deep puncture wounds on its back, another cowered in fear, and the third was nowhere in sight.

Within weeks, a pair of similar disappearances took place several blocks away. Homeowners there reported missing small dogs or cats; one canine was gone virtually within the blink of an eye.

Investigative interviews revealed all three pet owners recalled over-hearing shrieking and hooting. Given the swiftness with which these acts occurred, Sonoma County Humane Society officials were led to believe the villains were great horned owls, swooping down from the night sky. In all three cases, the victims were small enough to be carried off by the winged predators.

According to Humane Society

spokesperson Angie Bonnert, the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) is a stealthy predator that weighs about 4 pounds when fully grown but can fly off with prey three times its size after attacking with a potent combination of surprise and razor-sharp talons.

The owls typically prefer rodents, squirrels, skunks, raccoons and rabbits, but they are also known to target unsuspecting dogs and cats when the situation presents itself.

"In fact, owls may be responsible for the disappearance of many domestic pets, especially within city limits," Bonnert reported.

Because of the mysterious nature of how owls hunt, Bonnert explained, pet owners don't quite realize what's happened, but all of a sudden their animal is missing.

"Great horned owls use silent flight, incredible night vision and strength to overpower their prey," Bonnert added.

Since it's common for owls to return to the same spot once they locate a food source, she cautions people with small pets up to 15 pounds to be mindful of attacks and recommends keeping the animals on a leash while outside — especially during dusk when owls are most active — and during the owls' nesting season, which occurs between February and May. Outdoor cats should be brought indoors at night for their protection.

While she doesn't begrudge owls for doing what comes naturally, Bonnert said she hopes the publicity concerning the attacks will encourage pet owners to take prudent steps and precautions to thwart similar attacks.

"The Humane Society's main goal is a preventive focus, making small pet owners aware of the danger from owls," she pointed out. □

Wildlife Officers Engage Poachers And Much More

California's wildlife law enforcement agents do much more than check fishing licenses and enforce bag limits. In fact, they often put their lives at risk to

protect the state's citizens and its natural resources.

"(Wildlife) wardens are expertly trained to investigate complex wildlife crimes, arrest suspects and ultimately protect the natural resources that belong to all Californians," said Nancy Foley, chief of the Law Enforcement Division of the California Department of Fish and Game. Although most hunters and anglers are law-abiding and respectful of resources, she added, "... repeat poachers and other criminals pose a constant challenge to our investigators."

The year 2009 included many difficult cases requiring wardens to confront suspects with little or no backup. Some of the more dangerous cases included:

- Binh Chau, age 35, of San Diego was arrested for the fifth time in less than three years for poaching lobsters in the La Jolla Conservation Area. On the CA DFG's list of most egregious poachers, Chau gained notoriety after his second lobster poaching arrest, when he was found to be hiding six lobsters in his pants.

- A Sacramento deer-poaching ring was exposed after poachers were observed killing deer in the Sierra foothills and then selling the meat. Deer DNA analysis by the CA DFG's Wildlife Forensics Laboratory identified 28 individual deer recovered at one suspect's residence.

- Over the last few years, five separate groups of Monterey County poachers have taken hundreds of black abalone, many of which were later offered for illegal sale. Shortly after Monterey County black abalone were federally listed as an endangered species in February 2009, CA DFG law-enforcement officers arrested Jerry Jones, 37, of Monterey and Terry Callahan, 47, of Seaside on charges of illegally possessing 51 black abalone.

Other high-risk cases included the apprehension of a murder suspect, several standoffs at gunpoint and numerous high-speed chases, one of which ended in a fiery crash of the suspect vehicle. □

BY DON VACHINI

California Shooter Named To USA National Junior Shotgun Team

USA Shooting, the national governing body for Olympic shooting sports, recently announced the selection of the 2010 National Junior Olympic Shotgun team. Of the nine young men selected from across the country, Michael J. Flores is the only Californian.

Flores is sponsored by the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance (COHA — www.outdoorheritage.org), which is a partnership of conservation organizations, the outdoors industry, other related interests and individuals who support science-based wildlife management and the preservation of hunting rights in California.

"It feels great to earn this recognition. I want my supporters to know this is as much their accomplishment as mine," said Flores. "I am proud to wear the letters USA, but I won't let the celebration overshadow the work ahead to pursue my Olympic dreams."

The Junior Olympic team is selected annually by the USA Shooting National Shotgun Coach. Criteria includes an individual shooter's performance in the previous year's shooting events, including the National Junior Olympics and National Championships. Other considerations for selection include a candidate's volunteer activities, academic performance and the national coach's judgment on the shooter's potential for future success.

Flores captured the 2009 California State Championship, as the youngest ever to win the title at 14 years of age. He went on to win the 2009 Canadian National Junior Open Championships in Vancouver, Canada. And, as a member of the Scholastic Clay Target Team in 2009, Flores won the gold medal at the California Junior Olympics and the bronze medal at the National Junior Olympic Championships.

Flores was 10 years old when his shooting talents were first discovered at COHA's 2005 California

Legislature Outdoor Sporting Caucus event. Bill Gaines, president of COHA, was excited by Flores skills and offered COHA's sponsorship.

"Flores demonstrated great potential, not only in shooting but in his ability to be a great ambassador for the conservation community and outdoor enthusiasts," Gaines said. "His selection to the Junior Olympic Team is proof of that. The outdoor community is proud of him."

While Flores' immediate goal is to win a spot on the World Cup team, his ultimate goal is participating in the 2016 Olympics. He is coached by Josh Lakatos, a 1996 Olympic silver medalist. □

Boat Inspections Focus On Tahoe Mussel Invasion

Beyond a doubt, invasive quagga mussels and zebra mussels are becoming a statewide nightmare, and concerned officials are seeking methods of control.

Once introduced, these prolific feeders, ranging from microscopic to the size of a fingernail, can alter an ecosystem as they consume food sources of native species, accumulate pollutants and clog pipes and intakes.

Since they attach themselves to any hard surface, boats are the primary transporters of these mussels. To date, the most effective means in battling these unwanted visitors with no natural predators is preventive care, keeping them from becoming established in the first place.

With these facts in mind, conservation officials in the northern Sierra Nevada are expanding their efforts to deter the unwanted invasives at Lake Tahoe and other nearby lakes and reservoirs. Specifically the Tahoe Resource Conservation District has been working with local officials and conservation groups to keep quagga mussels and zebra mussels out of lakes Donner, Independence, Stampede, Boca and Prosser.

Dave Roberts, manager of the conservation district, believes it's in ev-

erybody's best interest to keep the mussels from gaining a foothold. "If they get into one of these lakes, it'll be that much harder to keep them out of Tahoe."

The agency is trying to protect the Reno area's primary water source, the Truckee River, from infestation. The effort is being funded through a \$231,000 grant from the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, Reno's major water provider.

Currently, all boats must undergo an inspection before entering Lake Tahoe in an effort to keep the non-native mussels out of its pristine, clear-blue waters. While officials ultimately hope to expand boat inspections to the other area lakes and reservoirs around Tahoe, Roberts said logistics of the pilot program are still being worked out. "We plan to share our experiences from the Tahoe Basin and ultimately have universal inspections," he added.

Roberts noted the rigors of the screening process are creating a bit of a hassle lakeside, especially during busy launch times. A popular suggestion on the table includes designating one central location in the Truckee area where boats could be checked and, if clean, given a sticker to expedite the launching process at any of the lakes. □

Man Discovers World-Record Swordfish

Utilizing diligence, a bit of luck and a huge assist from the International Game Fish Association, Californian Rob Frudden managed to track down his grandfather's previously unknown world-record swordfish.

M.M. Culver was the man who decades ago introduced fishing to Frudden's dad — and ultimately to Frudden and three generations more of anglers in the Frudden family.

While sorting through some of his late-grandfather's personal belongings, the younger Frudden noticed a hand-written note referencing a

Continues on page 56...

IN THE FIELD

...Continued from page 12

"world record, 50 pounds" swordfish. He wanted to determine if his grandfather had indeed caught an authentic world-record swordfish, and, if so, if he could obtain a duplicate IGFA certificate. "I want to use the certificate to help memorialize my grandfather's love of fishing," he said.

He contacted IGFA representative Jack Innis who put him in touch with world record coordinator Becky Wright at IGFA headquarters in Florida. Entering Culver's name in the system produced no information, so the search deepened. At first, Innis figured Culver might have landed the fish before 1939, when the IGFA officially began keeping records.

At this point, Innis sought the help of IGFA trustee Mike Farrior, an avid antique tackle collector and fishing historian. Almost immediately, he noted that the words "50 pounds" suggested a date range when the swordfish may have been caught.

"Record fish caught before the IGFA was created would have had line strength listed in 'threads' not pounds," he said. "Unless there was a mistake in the note, Mr. Culver's fish had to be taken after WWII."

Armed with this new information, IGFA Librarian Gail Morchower broke open the physical record books and began an entry-by-entry search. After a laborious two days, she found it. Indeed, the annals verified M. M. Culver had caught an official world-record broadbill swordfish on September 2, 1948. Officially weighing 302 pounds, measuring 9 feet, 8 inches in length; and with a girth of 45 inches, the swordfish was caught off Dana Point, California. True to the scribbled note, the fish had established the 50-pound line-class standard and stood for some time (the current record is a 643 pounds, 8 ounces swordfish, caught in 1998).

Frudden remains very appreciative of the combined efforts of several IGFA staff and is ecstatic the duplicate certificate will rightfully

accompany his grandfather's fishing memorabilia. □

Google Maps Bike Routes

Golden State bicyclists can now benefit from an Internet directional search service designed especially for two-wheeling aficionados. Available on Google Maps, the program provides routes that steer riders away from heavily congested areas and big hills.

While getting from point A to point B is part of the mapping service offered, the site helps pinpoint bike paths, bike lanes and bike-friendly routes, opening up an entirely new transportation world for cyclists of all levels.

The premise is the same for motorists who enter a starting point and a destination to receive a map and directions. Originally created for persons who bike to work or to the store, recreational options are now included.

According to Elaine Filadelfo, a Google mapping spokeswoman, the Rails-to-Trails project — which helps develop old abandoned railroad right of ways into bike and pedestrian paths — provided its original database of 1,600 bike paths and bike trails totaling more than 30,000 miles. Although the service has been under development for two years by Google mapping engineers in Seattle, it is still in the developmental stage, she said.

"However, new technology in the past six months has made it feasible," Filadelfo said. "Now that the site is live, users can report problems, give us local feedback and corrections or submit suggestions."

According to Christine Culver, executive director of the Sonoma County Bicycling Coalition, this service is long overdue, especially for those preferring courses free of cars.

"They have done a really good job of marking what the routes are and if it's a bike path, bike lane or route," she pointed out. "It is an excellent tool to figure out which is the best path to take."

On the same site where motorists get

directions, Google has added a drop-down menu to select bikes instead of cars. For more information, visit www.maps.google.com. □

Longest-Tenured State Game Warden Retires

When Danny Moraga entered the police academy to become a game warden, Gerald Ford was our nation's president. He is the California Department of Fish and Game's longest tenured game warden and he retired in June after more than 33 years of service.

"Lt. Moraga's institutional knowledge and dedication to California's fish and wildlife serves an example to wardens," said Capt. Roy Griffith, his supervisor. "Many current wardens weren't born when Danny started."

Lt. Moraga set his career goal to become a warden after he was contacted in the field by two CA DFG wardens while scouting for deer. A conversation ensued and soon he was on his way to the Academy. One night during the first month on the job near the desert town of Brawley, a suspected drunken driving stop ended with a stolen car and three burglary suspects, a loaded handgun on the front seat and more stolen firearms in possession. Lt. Moraga quickly realized that a warden's job would often put him in harm's way.

After transferring to the San Francisco Bay Area, Lt. Moraga worked many undercover details involving illegal sale of fish and, he said, he thoroughly enjoyed catching salmon poachers. He then moved to Plumas County, where he thought the pace might slow down a bit, only to have northern pike discovered in Lake Davis in 1994.

In retirement, Lt. Moraga plans to hike the John Muir Trail, a feat he accomplished in 1998. He will take the trek a little bit slower this time, stopping to fish for golden trout in some of the high-elevation waterways. □

BY DON VACHINI

Recognize Edible Mushrooms, Avoid Sickness

There remains a special allure to the mystery of the mushroom, whose culinary potential is legend.

Fall marks the beginning of the wet, rainy season that nurtures the fungi in dank places and brings out mushroom hunters throughout the state's suitable habitat. More than 500 edible species of mushrooms are found along the Marin-Sonoma-Mendocino County coast, where the foggy, rainy climate is ideal for their growth.

Among the most sought-after edible mushrooms are porcini, pig's ear, sweet bread and chanterelles. Less-tasty varieties include milk caps, candy caps, and strawberries and cream which, when dried, can be used in deserts, including ice cream.

On the coastline, mushroom aficionados favor a kind of porcini called the king bolete, which resembles a well-baked loaf of bread. Salt Point State Park and locations within the Point Reyes National Seashore are especially popular where park rangers enforce a strict 5-pound limit per day with fines imposed. King bolete season runs just two weeks. Butter bolete season follows, and chanterelles typically emerge from late October-January.

Mushroom hunters also search the the Sierra Nevada mountains at elevations between 5,000 and 7,000 feet.

But the lure of tasty can also prove deadly for the unknowing who mistakenly pick poisonous mushrooms. In 1982, more than a dozen Laotian refugees were hospitalized after eating poisonous mushrooms gathered near Santa Rosa's Spring Lake. Twelve years ago, 31-year old Sam Sebastiani Jr. died after eating lethal death cap mushrooms gathered during an outing in Sonoma County.

According to Ryane Snow, a California mushroom guide for more than 30 years, learning to identify mushrooms is a crucial first step before heading into the woods to hunt them. In addition to the aptly named death cap, a number of less deadly but toxic mushrooms are found along the

California coast.

Contrary to what many believe, the most common source of mushroom poisoning stems from eating mushrooms that have been contaminated with bacteria from sitting in refrigerators too long. Snow advises tossing them after a week and also advises against eating them raw.

"Cooking can destroy toxins and bacteria that may be harbored. It also breaks down their indigestible cell walls to release protein," he said.

More information about mushrooms and their dangers is available from the Sonoma County Mycological Association and its Web site: somamushrooms.org; as well as from the North American Mycological Association and its Web site: namyco.org. □

Wineries Join Forces To Restore Steelhead Creeks

Several Northern California landowners, wineries and environmental groups are involved in a joint venture to protect a pair of native fish species and their habitat along sensitive areas of creekside vineyards.

Last year, hatcheries at Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino reported a near-record low of under 900 adult steelhead returning to spawn. The river's beleaguered Coho are even more rare. Studies reveal water diversions, groundwater pumping, dams, pollution and poor ocean conditions share the blame for this decline.

In one instance, Mike Brunson, a Russian River winemaker and vineyard manager for Michel-Schlumberger Wine Estate, sits on the cusp of the creek restoration front. Not to be outdone, other nearby winery personnel are attempting to bring the Russian River's endangered Coho salmon and steelhead back from the brink of extinction.

Five years ago the winery, located in Dry Creek Valley, partnered with the California Department of Fish and Game and Trout Unlimited to restore salmon and steelhead habitat on a half-mile stretch of Wine Creek, which

flows through the property into nearby Dry Creek, a Russian River tributary and major spawning site.

Utilizing a \$50,000 grant, Brunson and others took what had been an artificially straightened waterway and added pools to help slow water, providing places for fish to rest, and placed native vegetation along its banks to provide shade and cool the stream.

The work apparently paid off for both vineyard and fish. The creek banks are less susceptible to erosion, preserving vineyard space, and this past 2009 season, Brunson noted, several adult steelhead were seen moving upstream to spawn. Previously, Brunson had not observed fish in the channel.

A growing number of landowners throughout the Russian River watershed have joined the same restoration campaign, seeking out unlikely allies in conservation groups and wildlife agencies in a bid to further restore streams for fish. During the past five years, various state and resource groups, including TU, have partnered with Quivara Vineyards, Preston Vineyards and Michel-Schlumberger to restore more than a mile of spawning tributary streams in Dry Creek Valley.

The projects build on established initiatives such as the Napa-based Fish Friendly Farming program, which recognized landowners who use non-polluting, water-conserving farming methods that can improve fish habitat.

Momentum appears to be growing by word of mouth, according to Kent MacIntosh, a Trout Unlimited representative and North Coast fishing guide. Although Quivara Vineyards already was enrolled in the program for the past six years and had previously restored nearly a half-mile of Wine Creek, the current owners are looking at an additional project that will re-create pool habitat and historic flood plain just upstream of where Wine Creek meets Dry Creek.

On a recent tour of the restoration projects, MacIntosh proudly uttered his favorite pitch line about the projects.

"If you build it, they will come," he said of the fish.

For additional information on the Trout Unlimited Wine and Water pro-

Continues on page 56...

IN THE FIELD

...Continued from page 12

gram, visit TU's Web site at www.tu-california.org. You can also learn more about the California Fish and Game Fisheries Restoration Grant Program by visiting the Web site of the CA DFG at www.dfg.ca.gov. □

Modern Fish Mounts Preserve Live Specimens

In an effort to preserve a memorable catch or rekindle a precious fishing memory, many anglers commonly have had their notable prizes mounted for display on office walls or dens.

Meticulous and tedious preparations included keeping the specimen moist, cool and either wrapped in a wet cloth or frozen. Ultimately, the skin was stretched over a wire or wood frame and lacquered to represent the live specimen. However, these skin mounts didn't hold up well over time or against temperature changes and sunlight, often losing their luster, cracking and showing signs of deterioration.

While much of today's angling trend has shifted more toward photographing and releasing trophy catches rather than killing them, modern technology has entered the arena to accommodate mounting fish that were released to swim again.

"While the original fish can still be mounted, only basic information (about the live specimen) is now needed to result in a more professional, longer lasting product," explains Tony Davidson, owner of Davidson Taxidermy in Big Pine.

Contradictory to the older days when an actual fish was needed to physically skin and mount the animal, all that is necessary now is basic data collected from the fish, which can be released to grow to larger proportions.

"The current system is increasingly more popular and feasible, especially to non-consumptive anglers," he said. "Providing a color photo and length

and girth measurements allows us to capture its unique characteristics and create a durable, lifelike, fiberglass reproduction of the original fish."

These "plastic" fish mounts are intended to last and maintain their shape, coloration and detail. Besides true-length dimension fish, other popular requests include miniature or scaled-down desktop mounts, which capture the rich colors, yet are less bulky and cumbersome for the office.

As an advertising ploy, local business establishments and chambers of commerce often order a likeness of a record fish to be displayed in local establishments for customers to peruse. Such is the case of the recent 6-pound line-class world-record golden trout caught by Bishop resident Brandon Parker. Long noted as a sportsmen's angling destination offering trophy rainbows, browns and brook trout, the area also houses some of the largest golden trout in the world in its crag-filled backcountry lakes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Davidson recently created two mounts of the largest golden trout (*Oncorhynchus aqua-bonita*) caught in the past 52 years. One is for Parker; the other is a replica of a 27-inch, 7-pound golden trout that adorns a popular Bishop dining spot, showcasing the monster specimen to both customers and wishful anglers setting their sights on capturing a like fish.

For more information regarding trophy-fish mounts, contact Davidson Taxidermy at (760) 938-3218 or (760) 793-3131 or visit www.fishmount.com. □

Documentary Highlights Stream Restoration

An award-winning documentary showcases a popular creek restoration program, which has taken place over the past 15 years and displays the commitment one group of students and teachers has accepted for leading the stewardship of the San Francisco Bay and its vast watershed.

Directed by Kevin White and David Donnenfeld of Filmmakers Collaborative SF, "A Simple Question: The Story of STRAW" covers the work of Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed. The program was started in 1993 by The Bay Institute, a Novato-based non-profit environmental organization founded in 1981. It protects, restores and inspires conservation of the Bay Area and its watershed, all the way to the west slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains where it rises.

For nearly 30 years, the Bay Institute has been developing and leading model scientific research, education and advocacy programs to preserve this watershed, which includes the Sacramento and the San Joaquin rivers and their tributaries; Suisan Marsh; San Pablo Bay; and San Francisco Bay, itself.

To date, the STRAW program has completed more than 300 "restoration days" involving 25,000 students — from kindergarten through 12th grade — at schools in Sonoma, Marin, Napa and Solano counties, said Watershed Education Director Laurette Rogers of The Bay Institute. The initial 1993 undertaking was on Stemple Creek, which flows through the Martin Dairy Ranch in Two Rock, west of Petaluma.

"Twenty miles of wetlands and creeksides in the four counties have been restored by the program, originally created to improve habitat for the endangered California freshwater shrimp," Rogers said.

The Bay Institute's founders had the great foresight to know that the future of San Francisco Bay depended on the future of its watershed, an area that encompasses 40 percent of California. A few highlights of its past 28 years include the Bay-Delta Accord, which increases freshwater flows to the Bay; the San Pablo Bay Watershed Restoration Program; and the preservation of the Tolay Lake Ranch as Sonoma County's largest regional park.

Learn more about The Bay Institute by visiting its Web site at www.bay.org. □

BY DON VACHINI

...Continued from page 12

CA DFG Reviews Bear Hunting Regulations

Bear hunting in California has come a long way since the 1920s. During the past half-century, the state has regulated bear hunting. Trapping has been outlawed, and a hunting season currently runs from October to the last Sunday in December, depending on the region. Cubs under 50 pounds and mother bears with cubs may not be killed, hunters must obtain identification tags, and only one bear per season is allowed.

At a recent meeting of the California Department of Fish and Game, a proposal to expand bear hunting was introduced and, as expected, drew stringent protests. Nearly 70 environmental, community and animal-welfare organizations have lined up to oppose the proposal, including the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and various chapters of the Sierra Club. They basically feel the proposal to be unsporting, reckless and the killing is too easy.

However, officials at the CA DFG say they proposed the changes because the state's black-bear population is flourishing and rapidly spreading. Black bears have long thrived from Northern California to Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties, according to Doug Updike, a CA DFG game program manager and wildlife ecologist.

"The number of bears statewide has increased from under 10,000 in the early 1980s to nearly 40,000 currently. They get hit by cars, we get reports of damage by property owners, and they break into houses."

The CA DFG is also looking at increasing hunting areas in Lassen and Modoc counties, where bear numbers have dramatically increased, and are trying to decide on eliminating a cap on bear kills and allowing hunters to put collars with GPS tracking devices on their hounds. □

Stocking-Stuffers For Outdoorsmen

Because outdoorsmen are such a varied group who are involved in myriad activities, trying to find a meaningful (and useful) gift for them can often be a daunting task. Whether patronizing local stores or online shopping sites, a plethora of items can be found for annual stocking-stuffers in all budget classes, ranging from under \$5 to well over \$100.

One of the most feasible hints for effective gifting is not waiting until the last minute to begin. Be alert and keep an observant eye for the intended person you are buying for well in advance. An idea often can present itself earlier in the year while on a fishing, hunting or outdoor trip. Make a note of it for future reference.

Learn a little about the person for whom you are shopping and try to personalize the gift. While remembering it's the thought that counts, gifting ideas can be as varied as the individual's specific needs or interest.

One of the most simple and significant presents is a gift of time, whereby the gift pledges (in writing) a plan for a future outing. Options include attending a sporting event, a day of bird-watching, a hiking or biking excursion, and fishing local waters.

Tried-and-true stocking stuffers include chapstick, key-ring flashlights, mini fans, assorted fishing lures, hand warmers and mini headlamps — all priced under \$5. Practical ideas that range to about \$10 apiece include prepared fishing baits, first-aid kits, assorted tackle, fishing line, wind-resistant lighters, socks, gloves, a digital compass and emergency blankets.

Outdoor-related magazine subscriptions or renewals of existing ones are increasingly popular gifts, as are pre-paid gift cards or gift certificates available at specific stores for any amounts, which allow the recipient to choose their own selections. In addition to ammunition and how-to books, fishing licenses and accompanying stamps (now available online) are also thoughtful gifts under \$50.



Whether given to a family member or friend, the gift of time is a very meaningful present! Options include attending a sporting event, a day of bird-watching, a hiking or biking excursion, and fishing local waters. Photo by Don Vachini.

One reliable Web site — www.Custom.Sugoi.com — offers customers the opportunity to work on their clothing designs online and see that design in 3D on a silhouette, giving the customer a full appreciation of the finished garment.

As part of a new wave of online innovations, Web sites offer just about anything an outdoorsman needs. Here are a few:

- The Gear Junkie Archive — TheGearJunkie.com/archive — is a stock of 200-plus gear reviews written by nationally-syndicated newspaper columnist Stephen Regenold (aka The Gear Junkie). One of the newest items on the site is Coghlan's Survival Kit-in-a-Can, a quirky product that houses trinkets and outdoors doodads in a vessel resembling a sardine tin.
- Wenger's Swiss Army Knife — The venerable Swiss Army Knife has a number of companion products displayed at www.SwissArmyKnife.com. The company long known for top quality cutlery and watches now also produces footwear, outdoor gear, travel gear and more.
- Safari Press — This must-see Web site — www.SafariPress.com — for those who relish hunting escapades both past and present offers numerous, hair-raising episodes in book form. □

BY DON VACHINI

U.S. Marines Train In The Sierras

With its combination of contrasting, high-desert sage and steep, snow-covered peaks, the area of Bridgeport in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains offers prime hunting and fishing opportunities. However, over the past several decades, outdoorsmen are not alone as they hike, stalk, climb and fish this long-noted sportsmen's mecca. Unbeknownst to many, a Marine base shares this land, training leathernecks in preparation for ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and other Middle East hotspots.

Sharing the rugged Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest with civilian outdoorsmen, thousands of Marines utilize the torturous training conditions to seek an advantage at medium and high altitudes in Afghanistan and other potential theaters. No other military venue in the nation can replicate those harsh conditions better than the isolated Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in California's West Walker River drainage.

While Highway 108 courses past the training center's buildings in Pickel Meadows, Marines train on 46,000 mountainous acres owned by the federal government 20 miles north of Bridgeport. Set just outside Yosemite National Park's northern boundary, the site has been used since the Korean War.

However, the remote facility has taken on a new significance because of the war's mountainous terrain and spread-out populations. The facility is meant to prepare Marines for Afghanistan's cold, snowy winters amid rugged landscapes where communication is difficult, high altitudes make breathing labored, and the trajectory of bullets is difficult to gauge. To enhance the realism, various areas have been given names to sound Afghan.

As an added component, the Marines have recently expanded training eastward into the flatlands controlled by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, a 68-mile overland route over

Lucky Boy Pass leads to the Army depot in Hawthorne, Nevada, and prepares soldiers for the roadside bombs and sniper attacks they are likely to encounter in the Afghan theater.

At the Bridgeport Center, the Marines receive training in avalanche survival, cold-weather medicine, the use of donkeys and mules as pack animals, and how to adjust sniper shots for thin air and tricky winds.

Eight times a year, entire battalions come to this camp for the 21-day exercise called Mountain Warrior. During winter, an additional two days are added for snowshoe instruction. The region's rough terrain allows the Marines to see how tough Mother Nature can be ... and to meet the challenge of being "all they can be!"

For hardy souls interested in competing, the Annual Mountain Warfare Training Challenge (MWTC) held in May is the only event open to civilians at this mountain warfare training center. Quite possibly the toughest 10K race on Earth, the MWTC footrace is a challenging off-road 10K run with obstacles such as a tire course, a low crawl, a 5-foot wall climb and a tunnel crawl — all done at high altitude on ground terrain used to train the world's hardest warriors. Participants may race individually, within their age division, or as a member of a three-person team. Entry includes a commemorative T-shirt, medals to top finishers and a carbo-loading dinner the night before. After all, you're running with "The few, The proud, The Marines!"

For more information, go online to www.CampPendletonRaces.com/mwtc. □

Ecosystem Experience Opens In LA

Nearly 10 years in the making, the Ecosystem Experience at the California Science Center in Los Angeles recently opened to the public.

An unprecedented blend of plants, animals and do-it-yourself, hands-on science takes up nearly the entire 45,000-square-foot exhibit in

Exhibition Park south of downtown Los Angeles. Eleven environments on display in this combination aquarium-zoo-school-arcade make it unique among science centers in the United States.

The complex was already the most attended museum in Southern California, with 1.4 million visitors per year. However, the Ecosystems center has nearly doubled the exhibition space and more than 2 million visitors are expected in the coming year.

The highlight is a 24-foot-long transparent tunnel through a 188,000-gallon tank that puts visitors face to face with sharks, giant sea bass, eels, rays and other fish. Other features include walking through a living kelp forest and experimenting on a polar ice wall. Other attractions include the Rot Room, complete with flesh-eating maggots, beetles, sow bugs, roaches and millipedes; the Desert and Flash Flood, the Extreme Zone, the Island Zone and the Global Zone.

Susan Hackwood, executive director of the California Council on Science and Technology, said the cost was dollars well spent.

"The whole notion of hands-on, getting your hands wet, bringing the learning environment right up front and personal so you can smell the kelp, so to speak, makes a big difference in a child's life. And the cost is free," she said.

Ecosystems is the second phase of a three-part, 25-year master plan to reinvent the former California Museum of Science and Industry. During the first phase, the science center was redesigned with two permanent exhibits; an IMAX theater was added and an elementary school that focuses on science, math and technology was established. Phase Three is set to explore "Worlds Beyond."

The science center's neighbor includes the Expo Center, the California African-American Museum, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and Los Angeles Sports Arena. Visit www.DiscoverLosAngeles.com for more information. □

Continues on page 56...

Up A Creek WITH A Paddle

Whether out for a leisurely paddle, observing wildlife, fishing or a cardio-workout, kayak and paddleboat usage is up significantly entering the 21st century. Inexpensive, easy to transport, launch and handle, these popular recreational craft have introduced a "slough" of new venues to a plethora of novices.

However, they come with certain safety responsibilities, according to Paul Lebowitz, a kayak editor with *Western Outdoor News*, who can't stress awareness issues enough. Since many newcomers to the sport get themselves into precarious or dangerous situations on lakes, rivers or the ocean, he presents a realistically practical list for the cautious paddler.

He feels the most crucial aspect is knowing the capabilities of and becoming familiar with the new, high-riding craft. Paddlers should practice in a controlled environment to be ready for any emergency before it happens, he says. Here's the big one to know before you go — how to climb back on following a capsizing. It's called "self rescue" and should be practiced before venturing into deep water. One of the best learning venues is a swimming pool or a sheltered shallow area where entering and leaving can be learned properly.

Other important criteria on his list:

- Inspect your boat before launching to be sure all plugs are secure and the craft is solid. Once secure in your boat, plan a short excursion on a local waterway.
- Always check the weather and water conditions before launching, plan on going with another person, file a float plan and leave it with another person.
- Wear a personal floatation device (PFD), which should contain a whistle (sounded three times in succession in case of an emergency).
- Stored in the craft in a small dry bag should be a GPS unit, flashlight, water and food. A large dry bag should house a waterproof windbreaker and a fleece jacket for emergency warmth.

Keep your gear lashed down to prevent loss.

- Carry a hand-operated bilge pump and know how to drain your craft if it takes on water.
- Carry communication devices such as a cell phone stored in a waterproof container and a hand held VHF radio if in saltwater.
- Since exposure to the sun is an issue on open water, paddlers should wear sunscreen, a wide brimmed hat and long-sleeved shirt.
- Use the bow line to always tie up to a secure place when fishing or stopping.
- Wash, clean and re-inspect the craft after using and store according to manufacturer's instructions. □

CA Youth Youngest To Ascend Everest

Thirteen-year old Jordan Romero, from the San Bernardino mountain town of **Big Bear Lake**, recently became the youngest person to scale Mt. Everest.

He was initially inspired a few years prior by a painting in his school's hallway, which depicted the seven continents and their highest summits. With the help and encouragement of his family, he began a quest to climb all of those peaks.

At age 9, he conquered Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa and, over the past 4 years, has added additional peaks to his list. During September 2009, he conquered Oceania's 16,024-foot Carstensz Pyramid's summit, then set his sights on his 2 remaining peaks.

Probably the most challenging of the two was that of Mt. Everest, a daunting 29,035 feet above sea level, yet Romero and his team, which included his father, stepmother and three Sherpa guides, arrived at the peak well ahead of schedule.

Before him, 16-year old Tembe Tsheri of Nepal reached the peak in 2001 and Ming Kipa was 15 when she made the climb in 2003.

Jordan is now just one climb from his original quest to reach the highest peaks on all seven continents.

On his blog, Romero said, "Every step I take is finally toward the biggest goal of my life, to stand on top of the world." □

Hunts For Wounded War Heroes

The first all-women disabled veterans hunt was recently held near **Lompoc**, just north of **Santa Barbara**.

Spearheaded by Vickie Gardner for Alpen Optics, four hunters were the initial participants in what is called Celebration Hunt for Female Injured Vets, the first of its kind in the country.

On Gardner's suggestion, Paralyzed Vets of America's Outdoor Recreation and Safari Club International provided support and funding. Alpen Optics donated binoculars and rifle scopes to the women and picked up most of their expenses. Weatherby loaned them rifles and Vandenberg Air Force Base provided the hunting property and game processing facility.

Along with Gardner, who organized the whole event, local volunteer guides Steve Reisbeck and Alan Crowder plus Vandenberg AFB personnel were joined by Kisha Makerney of Fort Towson, OK; Marissa Strock from Sand Lake, N.Y.; Cate Callahan from San Antonio, Texas and Cheri Arnold, from Ward, Arkansas.

All four ladies were flown in from around the country for a pig hunt held in their honor. Although the goal for the weekend event was for each to shoot a pig, that satisfaction was only a portion of what was gained.

"Spending time in the outdoors is healing," said Gardner. "That's why we wanted to celebrate these brave young women by helping to get them outdoors to have some fun!"

She was also quick to point out the inspiration for this event was provided by the Paralyzed Veterans of America-Outdoor Recreation Heritage Fund (PVA-ORHF). For more information, contact her at (909) 987-8370. □

BY DON VACHINI

IGFA Bass World Records From CA

On June 2, 1932, George Perry landed a 22-pound, 4-ounce largemouth bass from Georgia's Lake Montgomery, which became the benchmark by which all future bass would be measured. While numerous challenges were documented by the IGFA over the decades, none managed to eclipse the all-tackle mark.

Although not native to California, transplanted *Micropterus salmoides* have done extremely well in the Golden State's deep, clear lakes and reservoirs. With a bevy of bass approaching 20 pounds being landed, many experts felt it was just a matter of time before the record fell here.

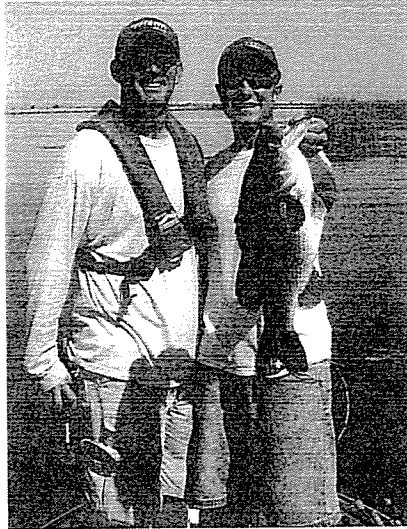
A handful of anglers have come close in the past, with Bob Crupi doing it twice, landing a 21-pound, 5-ounce leviathan in 1990 and a 22-pound specimen in 1991. Both were from **Lake Castaic** in southern California.

However, on July 2, 2009, avid bass angler Manabu Kurita landed a largemouth from Japan's expansive Lake Biwa. Weighing 22 pounds, 4 ounces, the behemoth was exactly big enough to tie Perry's 77-year old world record for the species.

Despite all the recent attention on Kurita's fish, focus still remains on California's widespread bass factories. Although the All-Tackle global standard has eluded California, the IGFA record book is still dominated by Golden State line and tippet class marks from a few distinguished in-state waters.

All Line classes are currently from Golden State waters. Crupi currently occupies the 2-pound (14 pounds, 12 ounces); 4-pound (17 pounds, 1 ounce); 12-pound (21 pounds, 5 ounces) and 16-pound (22 pounds, 0 ounces) classes, all from **Lake Castaic**. Terry McAbee holds the 6-pound (16 pounds, 9 ounces) class from **Lake Isabella**, Raymond Easley the 8-pound mark (21 pounds, 3 ounces) from **Oakview** and Dan Kadota the 20-pound mark (19 pounds, 0 ounces) from **Lake Castaic**.

Dennis Ditmars holds 3 fly rod re-



Year-round growth in SoCal, coupled with abundant forage that often includes fingerling rainbow trout from stockings make California's Florida-strain largemouth huge. ■ Photo courtesy of Sonoma State University Fishing Club.

ords, including 4-pound (9 pounds, 11 ounces) and 16-pound (12 pounds, 11 ounces), both from **Lake Dixon**, and 20-pound (9 pounds, 5 ounces) from **Lake Poway**. Larry Kurosaki holds a pair, 8-pound (16 pounds, 12 ounces), both from **Castaic Lagoon**. The other tippet classes, Herbert Ratner, Jr.'s 2-pound (8 pounds, 0 ounces) and John Lindsey, Jr.'s 6-pound (14 pounds, 2 ounces) are from out-of-state waters. □

Mastering the New CPR

In an ongoing effort to continually upgrade and improve on life-saving techniques, the medical profession is introducing a new procedure to replace an older one, hopefully to save more lives.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is now endorsing what is known as the continuous cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), also known as compression-only or hands-only CPR. According to a recent study, the new, trimmed-down method simplifies a confusing procedure of mouth-to-

mouth and chest compressions learned years ago. According to Dr. Ben Bobrow of the Arizona Department of Health Services in Arizona, the goal is to take away all the reasons bystanders do nothing when they witness another person collapse. "No risk, no fear of causing harm," he said.

This new version eliminates mouth-to-mouth breathing as part of the process. Instead, the procedure is simply hard, fast compressions administered to the center of the chest. The compressions circulate oxygenated blood to sustain the brain and body in the early minutes of cardiac arrest.

Indeed, given the panic in a cardiac arrest situation and poor recollection of training, conventional CPR is indeed a challenge to perform. Two major hindering factors are the compression-to-breathing ratio and the squeamish factor. According to AHA advisories, the hands-only CPR overcomes both of these obstacles.

THE STEPS:

If someone suddenly collapses, stops normal breathing and doesn't respond to gentle shaking, have someone call 9-1-1.

With the victim on his/her back, place the heel of one of your hands atop the other on the middle of the victim's breastbone.

Lock your elbows. With your shoulders over your hands, fall forward using your body weight, beginning rapid, firm compressions in the middle of the chest. Press 100 times a minute.

Don't bother to check for a pulse but continue this until paramedics arrive. Many cardiac arrest victims are still gasping but need CPR. The best immediate care is to keep the heart pumping without delay.

For cases involving small children and victims of near-drowning, standard CPR involving mouth-to-mouth and chest compressions is still the recommended procedure.

To see a video demonstration, view www.azshare.gov.

The basics can be learned in under 60 seconds. It's a minute that could one day save a life. □

BY DON VACHINI

DFG Automated Licenses

Developed especially for the DFG, the Automated License Data System (ALDS) is currently in place, enabling hunters and fishermen to purchase licenses using a real-time automated system.

The largest system of its kind in the world, it will provide an unmatched level of service to license-buying constituents. The system gives customers immediate access to the license inventory, which will eliminate the need to visit a DFG office or wait for products to be delivered by mail.

According to James Fong, chief of DFG's License and Revenue Branch, the advantages go beyond convenience. "Not only will we be able to improve customer service, but we will be able to use the information in the database to better manage wildlife and comply with federal grant requirements, which translates into more revenue for our wildlife management and enforcement programs.

"While the new requirements will ensure a complete and accurate customer database, the ALDS will also reduce the risk of fraud, improve the DFG's ability to better manage resources, provide more equitable outdoor opportunities and meet federal mandates that require complete customer data.

"Although the first year transaction times might be slower, the process will be quicker in the future since the customer's information will already be in the system.

"License agents won't run out of licenses and stamps and customers will be able to easily replace lost licenses at any agency for a reduced fee," Fong added.

Traditional hunting and fishing licenses will still be available at non-ALDS license agents until the system is fully implemented statewide, which is expected by early 2011. Fishing licenses continue to be available for purchase online at www.calicensetofish.com.

Customers are also able to buy licenses for others as gifts as long as the licensee's personal data can be provided. If not, they can purchase a voucher that can be redeemed at any ALDS license agent.

Ten agents participated in the initial statewide pilot program. To find a license agent near you or learn more about ALDS, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing. □

Red Fox Confirmed

Scientists are hailing the confirmed find of a **Sierra Nevada red fox** north of **Yosemite National Park**, a native subspecies thought to be extinct in the range.

The fox was photographed August 11, 2010 near **Sonora Pass** in the **Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest** by a motion-activated camera set up by U.S. Forest Service employees monitoring activities of other wildlife. In checking hundreds of digital photos taken by the camera, wildlife technicians came across the image. Though over-exposed, the photo showed the rare red fox with its characteristic white-tipped tail attempting to get at a chicken-filled bait bag dangling from a tree limb.

According to Ben Sacks, an assistant professor of biology at **UC Davis**, this was the most exciting animal discovery in California since the discovery of a wolverine in the Sierra two years ago. While the wolverine wandered into the Sierra from the Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho, "[T]his time the unexpected critter turned out to be homegrown, which is truly big news."

The Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*) lives at high elevations, dining on small birds and mammals. It has a reddish head, back and sides;

black backs of the ears; black "socks" on its feet; and a white-tipped tail.

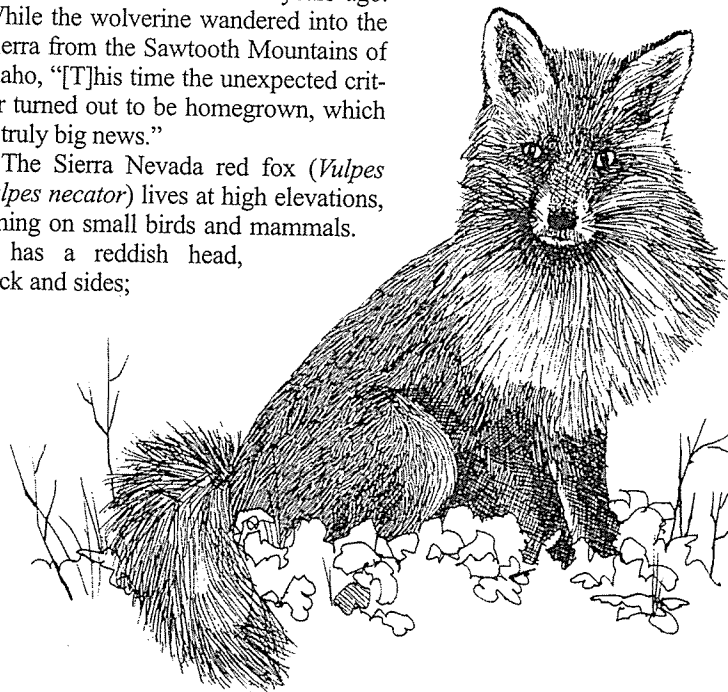
Previously, the only known population of the fox was roughly 20 animals in the **Lassen Peak** region. DNA evidence proved it was unlikely the fox wandered 150 miles south from Lassen to the Sonora area.

DNA analysis of saliva samples from punctures to the bait bag confirmed a positive identification, said Sacks. "This fox is distinct from the Lassen population with a genetic signature that we haven't seen outside of the skulls and skins of museum specimens collected before 1926."

The last confirmed sighting of a red fox in the Sonora Pass area was during 1990, according to Sacks. "What's exciting is it shows there are native mountain red foxes in the Sierra right now.

Federal biologists, UC Davis genetics researchers and university students have set up additional monitoring stations to try to determine the size and health of the Sonora Pass population, which is genetically distinct from fox species from the southern **Cascade Range**. □

BY DON VACHINI



SoCal's Big Deer

Forty-nine-year-old Mitch Perdue, a senior biologist and deputy dive safety coordinator with the U. S. Naval Facilities in San Diego, has been hunting deer in San Diego County since the late '60s. Although he primarily works Cleveland National Forest lands, on November 14, 2010, he hunted a private ranch in San Diego County, claiming quite a notable buck for Southern California.

According to Perdue, he located the buck along with five does at the top of a steep canyon at 11:30 a.m. They had been bedding down in the canyon and coming up each day to browse. Being in the thick of the rut, they didn't spook at all as he stalked them.

Using a Remington 700 .30-06, a Weaver 3x9 scope and 150-grain ammunition, his single shot from a kneeling position dropped the massive buck at 130 yards. "The 4x4's antlers measured 22 inches wide by 17 inches tall," he mentioned.

In this area, there appears to be crossbreeding between the typical coastal blacktail and the desert mule found in the Ranchita and eastern Laguna's. Situated in the county's northeastern mountains, the ranch has access to plenty of water, shares a border with some public land and endures light hunting pressure. Historically, deer will migrate there after opening day. "This, coupled with open space corridors from the desert to the east and coastal foothills to the west allows for good genetic exchange between herds."

The owner's agricultural background and management philosophy has meshed nicely with game management, not only providing guzzlers but leaving a lot of the wild lands alone for cover and forage.

More than anything, Perdue feels the 2003 and 2007 fires have improved local deer habitat 100 fold. "Looking at the amount of range opened up and the exponential increase in forage availability and protein, the deer herds are increasing in both size and vigor. In my 40 years of hunting San Diego County, I have never seen the numbers and growth rate so high."



Mitch Perdue's impressive 4x4 black-tail/mule deer cross weighed in at 120 pounds, field dressed. Photo courtesy of Mitch Perdue.

As far as the management strategy for the ranch, they will continue to leave the wild lands intact and continue water improvements. Since the herds that utilize the ranch during the rut are transient, the overall goal is to maintain a healthy herd of does and possibly look to planting legumes to increase protein and antler production. □

Rattlesnake Awareness

With the arrival of summer, California hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts readily enjoy myriad sun-bathed activities. However, they also share this land with many other creatures, including snakes, which can pose a hazard.

Snakebites affect 4,000-6,000 people in the United States each year, with roughly 70 percent of those needing antivenom treatment. While most snakes are harmless and signify a healthy ecosystem, rattlesnakes in parts of California present a significant risk.

During late-spring or early-summer, they become more active and seek the sun's warmth at the same time outdoorsmen are also emerging. Protecting oneself from snake-bites while enjoying the outdoors starts with awareness and avoidance, since most bites are caused by inattention or fool-

ish play. Some steps to take include wearing long pants or boots that cover the ankles when walking in high grass, brush or rocky areas. Before stepping over logs, large rocks or holes in the ground, check to see if it's clear on the other side.

Snakes like to bask in the sun during morning and late-afternoon periods then hide in shady spots during mid-day.

Even a careful person can accidentally surprise a snake and suffer a strike. If unlucky enough, the first aid you perform is crucial. The immediate goal of snakebite first-aid is to buy time. The venom travels into the superficial capillaries first and then enters the main bloodstream. Initial treatment involves keeping the venom from spreading too far before you get medical care.

Although not easy to do, remain calm. Increased heart rate and adrenaline cause the blood to move faster.

If you have a cell phone, call 9-1-1 to get help on the way.

If possible, use your cell phone camera to photograph the snake that bit you to properly identify it for treatment.

Swelling is a symptom of the bite. Remove or loosen any clothing or jewelry that may get tight as the area swells. Place wide, snug bands on either side of the bite. These bands should not restrict blood flow but will help slow down the spread of venom. If swelling gets worse, loosen them slightly.

DO NOT elevate the injured area, cut the bite and try to suck out the poison, use meat tenderizer to draw out the poison or use snakebite kits.

Not all snakebites are poisonous and not all poisonous snakes will release venom when they bite. If they do, the affected area will swell dramatically.

Treatment at a hospital will manage symptoms with supportive therapy and, if necessary, includes the use of antivenin.

Poisonous snakebites are rare, but when they occur, knowing how to respond is critical. □

BY DON VACHINI

Two Deer Of A Lifetime

Thirty-year old James Coppa, of Kelseyville, has hunting and fishing imbedded in his family traditions. When he was too young to hunt, he used to accompany his father and grandfather and, as he grew of age, began hunting pheasants and finally, deer. An avid outdoorsman to this day, he continues to hunt and fish with his father, sisters, cousins and brother-in-law.

Coppa recently struck it rich, bagging not one, but two deer of a lifetime over consecutive seasons. He recently told *California Game & Fish* that he had previously taken deer in zones X, B and A but had never hunted in D zone before and was new to the area, located on public land in the **El Dorado National Forest**. After a long season, walking various locations and scouting, observing and glassing, he finally found success on the last weekend of the season.

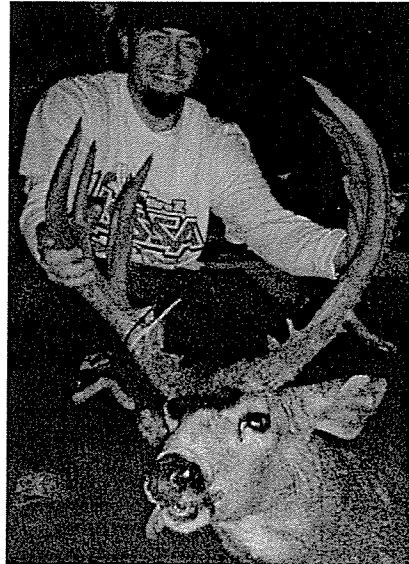
On November 2, 2008, Coppa had set up his scope near a small clearing and was about to fire at a small forked horn, which was hot on the tail of a doe. "At the last second, this old timer just appeared," he said. "Seeing the size difference, there was no question which buck to take."

With one clean shot, he made the kill. "Measuring 9x11, I knew that it was my deer of a lifetime. It was old, with hooves showing massive wear and only having five teeth in its mouth."

The buck was officially scored and ranks 16th all-time for California Blacktails, Non-typical.

Since he was now a bit more familiar with the D zone area, Coppa returned to the same location in October 2009, doubting he would ever see another deer quite like his 2008 monster. He should have consulted a crystal ball!

While sitting on a stand along a forested hillside a few miles from where he harvested his prior deer, a massive 3x3 presented itself broad-



James Coppa harvested these two record book bucks in consecutive years in Zone D in the El Dorado National Forest. Both bucks were taken with a Sako rifle passed down from his grandfather. Photos courtesy of Jen Bertram.

side. Calmly settling his breathing, he promptly dispatched it, again with one shot. With a 28-inch spread, its official score of 159 7/8 ranks it 13th on the California Blacktail list.

The rifle used in both hunts was a Sako .264 Win. Mag., which has been in the family for three generations. "It belonged to my grandfather, Frank Coppa, who hunted with it and killed many deer in California as well as other states. When he passed on, I inherited the rifle and have used it ever since, shooting every one of my bucks with it." □

Yosemite Bracing For 4 Million Visitors

Under statistics revealed by the National Park Service, Yosemite National Park is tentatively projected to reach 4 million visitors this summer. While in the past staggering numbers meant gate closures, gridlock and bad publicity, the future is promising.

Last summer, the park's busiest since 1996, there were no closures or lengthy waits to get inside the park boundaries. It seems the National Park Service has gotten serious about managing large crowds in one of America's most popular parks. It now employs a staff of 22, mostly young people employed only for summer, who guide motorists to parking and help them find less-congested areas of the park. Park officials claim this makes a huge difference.

Next season, officials will install a \$1.2 million traffic-tracking system, which uses underground sensors at park gates and an extensive computer network to get constant updates on crowded areas. Visitors will be able to get these updates via cell phones or online.

The 2010 visitor totals reveal close to 3.9 million entered the park gates, the highest since the record-setting 4.2 million in 1996. Nearly half the visitors arrive at the park during June, July and August, with their focal point being Yosemite Valley. Indeed, nearly 3 million per year visit the seven square miles containing such icons as **El Capitan, Yosemite Falls and Half Dome**.

Although a destructive flood in 1997 kept park totals between 3.3-3.7 million for more than a decade, totals began climbing, reflecting a national trend. Studies show national parks across the country becoming more popular in difficult economic times as people turn to money-saving vacations in nature. □

BY DON VACHINI

Steelhead Plants At Mill Creek Lake

A small lake in Mendocino County became the second water in the state planted with native steelhead trout under new environmental mandates. Over a six-month period, the DFG planted a total of 15,000 "steelies" in Mill Creek Lake that were raised at Warm Springs Fish Hatchery.

This fish planting met all new environmental planting regulations established in 2010 and state fish planning mandates codified in Assembly Bill 7 by Assembly Member Dave Cogdill (R-Modesto). According to the new mandates, non-native rainbow trout can no longer be planted there because of potential escapement downstream into the Russian River system, where they could interbreed with native steelhead trout.

Bill Cox, DFG state program manager of Fish Production and Distribution, said, "We are always looking for better ways to provide angling opportunities, make the best use of hatchery facilities and adapt to changing circumstances and regulations."

Culminating a two-and-a-half year effort to evaluate and analyze impacts of fish stocking on certain California native species, the DFG completed and filed the *Hatchery and Stocking Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement* in 2010. As part of the actions, waters like Mill Creek Lake fall under new strict stocking guidelines.

"We realized that waters like Mill Creek Lake could not be planted with non-native hatchery rainbow trout. So instead of writing it off as a lost fishing opportunity, we found a way to use all our resources at Warm Springs Hatchery and provide a fishery," said DFG Senior Hatchery Supervisor Brett Wilson.

The new planting program utilizes excess steelhead eggs from the Russian River drainage mitigation programs to rear steelhead trout to plant into Mill Creek Lake. These fish meet the genetic integrity of hatchery

steelhead stocks monitored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The key to the new planting program is utilization of hatchery space and resources. Only one concrete hatchery pond is needed for the rearing process, eggs come from normal hatchery operations, and food and personnel costs are covered under a reallocation of license money. Warm Springs Hatchery is fully funded by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and maintained and managed by the DFG. □

Beat The Heat

Even the fittest of athletes or outdoorsmen can succumb to overheating if they don't pay attention to the warning signs. Ascending a granite rock face, scrambling up a slope to scout for deer or a day hike to a high-elevation trout lake all involve strenuous activity, which can result in heavy sweating or overheating. Due care must be taken to alleviate serious problems down the line.

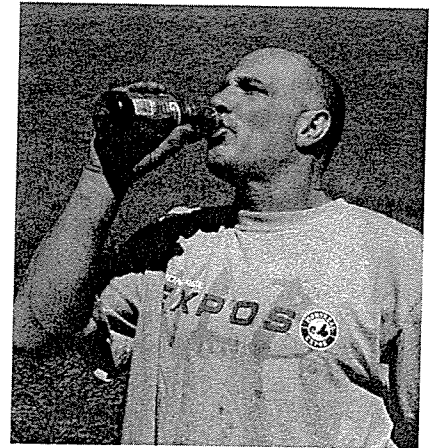
Explaining the science behind overheating in layman's terms, Gary Gaddis, emergency medicine chairman at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine, provides some insight on how to identify and treat symptoms of overheating. He firmly believes metabolic rate, conduction, convection, radiation and (lack of) evaporation are the main contributing factors to overheating:

- *The harder a person exercises, the more thermal heat the body produces.
- *Surfaces such as asphalt and rock fields draw more heat from the sun. Heat rises from here and is transmitted to the body.

- *A warm wind can actually add heat to the body and increase a person's body temperature.

- *Sunlight is more intense in the summer and early fall and its radiation also raises body temperature.

- *Evaporation is the body's best cooling mechanism. In situations of high humidity, sweat drips off the body instead of evaporating and cooling it.



Hydrating with sports drinks helps replenish fluids and electrolytes lost during strenuous activity. Photo by Don Vachini.

While dizziness, headache, nausea and goose bumps can be early signs of overheating, Gaddis hints that cramps, diarrhea and spasms in arms or legs are more serious indicators your body isn't tolerating the heat.

"Sweating reduces the overall blood volume in the body. There is a competition between sending blood to your brain to keep you awake, blood to the skin to keep you cool and blood to the muscles to keep them working," he said.

Recovery tips include stop exercising, seeking shade and a sports drink or water. "Apply cold, wet washcloths to the head and surfaces of the skin near the armpits and where the front of the thighs meet the trunk. This allows blood to cool and dissipate heat more quickly."

Sports drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade replace fluids, electrolytes and salt lost in sweat. Eating a sports bar or fruit also helps recovery.

The fastest way for a body to cool off is for water to evaporate off the skin. While water from a cold shower evaporates more efficiently, a hose in the shade will do as well for those outside. Removal of as much clothing as possible maximizes the skin's surface area. Be sure the water in the hose cools off before wetting down the body. □

BY DON VACHINI

Sea Otters In Hot Water

Hunted close to extinction for their prized pelts during the 19th century, sea otters have made a remarkable comeback along California's Central Coast. Indeed, this charismatic critter found the kelp beds along the Pacific coast to their liking and numbers rose significantly.

However, scientists and conservationists are again concerned for the future of these furry ocean animals. According to Tim Tinker, lead scientist on sea otter studies for the U.S. Geological Survey's Western Ecological Research Center, recent preliminary numbers released put their average population at 2,700, which is down about 4 percent over the past four years. While recent evidence points to a toxin produced by freshwater bacteria called microcystin, he believes a combination of shark attacks (probably Great Whites) and a limited food supply are the most likely culprits to blame for this decline.

Though the object of concern, otter numbers still remain stable along most coastal habitat. □

Kids Firearm Safety

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) has launched an online campaign offering free educational videos about firearm safety and wildlife conservation to teachers and school administrators across the country.

A longtime leader in promoting firearm safety and conservation education, NSSF is pleased to report that more than 4,500 DVDs have been ordered by educators, reflecting their strong interest in teaching students about these important subjects.

"We believe teachers and school administrators should teach students how to correctly respond if they encounter an unattended firearm. Students who understand what to do in such situa-

tions can potentially save lives," said Steve Sanetti, president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, trade association for the firearms industry.

Regarding conservation education, Sanetti said, "It's important that students today understand how once-endangered species such as white-tailed deer and wild turkey have been brought back to abundance through efforts funded by hunters."

The Firearm Safety DVD contains three videos, two designed for viewing by students in various grade levels and one for a general audience. The school videos show students how to make correct decisions when encountering a firearm in an unsupervised situation at school, at home or at a friend's home. "McGruff the Crime Dog on Gun Safety" is designed for viewing by students in grades K through 6. "It's Your Call: Playing It Safe Around Guns" is for students in grades 6 through 9. "Firearms Safety Depends on You" is for general audiences.

The Wildlife Conservation DVD features three videos that teach students about America's lauded wildlife management system and how hunters contribute the majority of funding to conservation. "Wildlife for Tomorrow" is for students in grades 4 to 7. "Un-endangered Species" is for grades 7 to 12. "What They Say About Hunting," a mock debate of pro- and anti-hunting viewpoints, is for students in grades 7 to 12.

Educators can view the safety and conservation videos online.

Each DVD contains guides and activity masters to assist teachers in fostering classroom discussions.

More than 100,000 schools across the country have received NSSF's educational videos.

Learn more at www.nssf.org/education/video.cfm. □

Hiking With Pooch

Given their enthusiasm for exploring, a little bit of preparation, proper gear and owner's common sense, dogs can make excellent hiking companions.

According to Melissa Gaskill, author of *Best Hikes With Dogs: Texas*

Hill Country and Gulf Coast, all dogs can hike. "Your dog gets to hark back to his wild roots, you get a near-ideal hiking companion and you both get fresh air and healthy exercise."

Before taking your dog into the great wild, she suggests a few important steps:

- A basic obedience course, either professional or self-taught, is crucial. You must be able to control your dog at all times.
- Make sure your dog is fit. Start with shorter walks and slowly build up endurance. Have a vet check out his vital signs for underlying problems.
- Research your destination. Certain areas prohibit dogs, some require leashes and others allow free roaming. When choosing a trail, pick one with terrain that will be easy on your dog's paws. Make note of emergency veterinary centers in the area you are visiting.
- Consider your dog's needs as you would your own and pack accordingly. Take enough snacks, water and insect repellent for both.
- Once the expedition is underway, practice wilderness etiquette. Stay on the trail, walk single file when appropriate and steer clear of wildlife.
- Carry a compact roll of plastic baggies and a trowel to scoop the dog's poop. Waste packs are now available to pack out waste.
- Monitor your canine's condition. Check pads periodically for damage or redness and don't push too far.

Recreation and pet stores now carry all sorts of outdoor gear designed for dogs, including collapsible water bowls, hydration packs and booties to protect their pads.

A basic first-aid kit should include staples such as tweezers, antibiotic ointment and canine eye-wash, plus a muzzle.

Make sure your dog is wearing a license tag with contact information. The owner should carry a list of medical records to include vaccination history and any medical conditions in addition to a photo to show rangers or rescue personnel should the dog become lost. □

BY DON VACHINI

California Condor Numbers On The Upswing

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently announced the number of wild, free-flying condors in California has reached 100, the most in over half a century.

The carrion-eating birds, known for their huge, 9.5-foot wingspan and 60-year lifespan, soared from Mexico to Canada at the time settlers arrived. However, *Gymnogyps californianus* numbers steadily plummeted due to hunting, loss of habitat and the decline of the large mammal populations they dined on. Most recently, lead poisoning from ammunition has also taken a toll.

The USFWS credits a captive breeding program, initiated in Southern California in 1982 when only 22 wild condors existed, with this increase. Young condors born in captivity are released into the wild every fall at **Pinnacles National Monument** in central California and **Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge** on the southwest side of the **San Joaquin Valley**. While 11 juveniles were released this past year, the big birds are also reproducing on their own in the wild, adding 16 additional birds to the population since 2004.

While Arizona, Utah and Baja California, Mexico have wild populations, it is estimated that fewer than 400 California condors exist in the world today. □

Digging For Gold: A Modern Prospect

The biggest and most storied gold rush took place in California's **Sierra Nevada** in 1849. As history records, gold fever soon spread, impacting people worldwide.

While miners gleaned over \$12 billion of this precious metal in a little over a century, it is estimated that only 5 percent of the world's supply was tapped. Currently, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimates that over

33,000 metric tons — nearly 1.2 billion ounces — are still awaiting discovery. At today's prices, that amounts to about \$1.3 trillion worth of optimism, strong reasons for rekindling a huge fascination among outdoorsmen!

Unlike the 14-pound chunk exhibited in the **California State Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa**, most gold is usually found in minute bits and flakes in numerous streams washing out of the **Sierra Nevada Mountains**.

According to Keith Meldahl, a professor of geology and oceanography at **Mira Costa College in Oceanside**, there are many places in the state where anyone can pan for gold without having to file a claim or pay for a permit.

For those wishing to go for the gold, he hints the best procedure is to go to a gold-bearing area and ask questions. "Although many places are already claimed, owners will often point out sections where visitors are welcome to pan."

Eager novices should consider attending a Gold Prospectors' Association of America (GPAA; www.goldprospectors.org), gathering. Headquartered in **Temecula**. The organization is the world's largest gold prospecting membership association and is dedicated to finding and mining gold on a small or recreational scale. Membership includes plentiful detailed information and a gold panning starter kit that has everything needed to become a successful panner. □

1000 Species Update

Over the past few years, California-based fisherman Steve Wozniak has taken species hunting to a new level. Indeed, the **San Ramon** resident is well on his way to accomplishing his life goal of catching 1,000 species of fish, with a current total climbing to a remarkable 898 — and counting! Now within hailing distance, he hopes to achieve this goal by sometime in 2011 or 2012.

The quest initially began as a friend-

ly contest between a couple of friends and involved catching the most species of fish by hook and line. As part of their rules, any fish of any size counted but, in his own words, the contest soon went, "too far." He began focusing on gathering as many diverse types as possible and in multiple countries (his country total has climbed to 61), adding such destinations as Liechtenstein, Jordan and Cambodia, and places such as Weipa in northern Australia, the Red Sea, Kona and Monaco.

"Over the years there have been some really exciting catches, most notably a masher from the Cauvery River in India and a 200-plus-pound grouper in the middle of the night in Weipa, which nearly dragged me overboard!"

To date, his hardest catch proved to be the tench, a species he's pursued for seven years. He finally added it to his list last summer in England.

While he often plans trips around common game fish, he'll also spend time going after indiscriminate, non-game types such as chub, koi and tench. "It's getting harder to find new locations, so I have to seek out exotic places. Antarctica is really the last untouched place that I can go to," he said.

One challenge is getting the smaller species to bite. Minute bits of bait impaled on size-22 hooks and 2-pound line are commonly needed to entice some of these odd, exotic species.

He photographs every species, often from a variety of angles, then meticulously proceeds to identify it, incorporating numerous fisheries biologists around the globe (the www.fishbase.org Web site is also very helpful in this effort). Finally, he enters it on a spreadsheet, compiling a seemingly never-ending database.

He acknowledges working with quite a few ichthyologists on identifying many exotic catches. "These guys have been incredibly generous with their time."

To check on his progress as he approaches this milestone, contact him at S_Wozniak10@yahoo.com. □

BY DON VACHINI

Casting For Recovery

According to medical statistics, more than 500 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each day. Although most women will survive thanks to early detection and advances in medical treatment, just its diagnosis has a life-changing impact.

For the past 15 years, a unique support program named Casting For Recovery (CFR) has incorporated counseling, medical information, educational services and the sport of fly fishing to help promote mental and physical healing.

According to Peg Miskin, who serves as both the National and California program director, CFR provides fly-fishing retreats for women of all ages and in all stages of breast cancer. These getaways allow women whose lives have been profoundly affected by this disease to gather in a beautiful, natural setting and learn to fly-fish. "We introduce participants to the rhythmic motion of fly-casting, in itself an ideal physical therapy for exercising the joints and soft tissue affected by treatment and surgery."

Headquartered in Manchester, Vt., CFR was founded in 1996 but has since expanded to 26 states, including California in 2001. Offered at no cost to participants, CFR retreats are staffed by trained volunteers who provide education and support. Each site accommodates 14 women who apply (many of the referrals to the program come from the medical profession) and are selected through a random lottery. For 2 1/2 days, they are immersed in the world of fly-fishing, learning to cast, tie basic knots and identify the insects that trout eat. Assisted by CFR staff and local fly-fishing club volunteers, they take to the water on the last day to practice catch-and-release fishing. Although many participants have never picked up a rod in their lives, some go on to become active in the sport or volunteer for the CFR program, according to Miskin.

For a complete list of California retreat dates and sites — or if you'd like to find out more about CFR — visit

www.castingforrecovery.org. □

Winter Boating Safety

During the winter months, high seas, strong winds and widespread rain along the Pacific Coast are all factors that can make for unsafe conditions and claim lives. With this in mind, the U. S. Coast Guard, the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) and the National Weather Service collectively urge members of the public to exercise safe and responsible boating practices.

Weather and wave forecasts should always be checked prior to any ocean outing. While the DBW provides wave conditions at www.dbw.ca.gov, the NOAA Weather Radio or Web site www.wr.noaa.gov/mtr provide the latest updates.

While the Coast Guard and DBW strongly recommend individuals avoid taking to the water during storm conditions, vessel owners should also check the status of their mooring and anchoring arrangements during strong winds and heavy seas. A boat adrift can pose severe hazards to nearby people and vessels as they are tossed about, and pose environmental hazards if fluids or chemicals spill or leak.

The DBW offers some valuable winter water safety tips:

- Check and re-check current and forecasted weather and marine advisories from the National Data Buoy Center, www.ndbc.noaa.gov.
- Use a checklist to review safety procedures and equipment.
- File a float plan with relatives or friends. When possible, team up with other boats.
- Equip your vessel with a VHF radio, allowing direct communication with the Coast Guard.
- Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times (required for children under 13 while on deck).
- A survival suit should be worn during winter outings to prevent hypothermia should one get thrown overboard into the disablingly-frigid water.
- Affix reflective striping to life jack-

ets and survival clothing to aid in night rescues.

- Always be vigilant about changing conditions, obstacles, proximity to shore and breaking waves.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary offers boater safety classes and free boat inspections. Online classes are also offered by the DBW and the Boat Owners Association of the United States; www.boatus.com. □

Snowmobiling Mecca

A haven for snowmobilers, **Plumas County** harbors the largest number of registered snowmobiles in the state. Indeed, visitors as well as locals enjoy year-round resorts, shops and restaurants that cater to wintertime guests, making this northeastern county an ideal destination for veterans or beginners.

Offering a variety of groomed and ungroomed routes plus alpine scenery, such sites as **Bucks Lake**; **LaPorte**; the **Almanor Basin's Swain Mountain**, **Morgan Summit Jonesville** and **Fredonyer**; **Indian Valley** and the **Lakes Basin Recreation Area's Lookout Peak** and **Basset's Station** are popular areas to visit.

Farther east, **Lake Davis** and **Frenchman Lake** remain excellent locations for combining snowmobiling and ice-fishing for trout.

Winter driving is always a challenge in this mid-elevation location and visitors are reminded to drive slower and allow plenty of time to get there. Roads are generally well-maintained and passable during the winter but all vehicles should carry chains and stay abreast of the local weather forecast (530-221-5613) and road conditions (800-427-7623).

For more information, contact the Plumas County Visitors Bureau; (800) 326-2247; www.plumascounty.org; Explore! Sierra Touring Company (530-832-5450), or the High Sierra ATV Tours (800-596-8840). □

BY DON VACHINI