



The Fish Sniffer

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SEE OUR NEW BAJA ROUNDUP SECTION ON PAGES 32-33

Our 31ST Year

"The Magazine For West Coast Sportsmen!"

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Summertime Adventures to Remember



Jack Naves displays a large coho salmon that slammed a white hoochie behind a Sling Blade dodger at Lake Oroville on June 7th. Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Field Editor.

Some of my fondest childhood memories revolve around - you guessed it - fishing trips. Sure, Disneyland, the State Fair, and the like made for great summer fun when I was a kid. But my most vivid memories are from real-life adventures.

I still remember sitting on the shadowy rocks along the Mokelumne River under the glow of a Coleman lantern, waiting patiently for a catfish to come along. Another summer I recall hiking to 'the big falls' on the South Fork of the American River, anxiously looking for wild trout.

Every August I think back to when I was nine or ten years old trying for a lunger bass on a small pond in the foothills. I can still smell the dry summer grass and feel the warm breeze.

Now that I have a wife and kids of my own, I'm beginning to share the same experiences with them (those of you who have small children know that the true adventure is trying to get your wife and kids out of the house at five o'clock in the morning). I recently had the opportunity to take summer family fishing trips to two of my favorite reservoirs in Northern California.

To the north we fished Lake Oroville, which was filled to the brim with both water and coho salmon. And to the west, we explored Lake Berryessa, which boasts some of the



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What's Hot?...FRESHWATER

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biggest kokanee and landlocked kings anywhere in the state.

On June 7 we loaded the boat and arrived at Lake Oroville just after seven o'clock in the morning. I quietly guided the boat into the shady side of a steep rock wall just west of Canyon Creek. The lines hadn't been in the water more than five minutes when I heard a splash behind the boat. Low and behold, a feisty Coho salmon had pulled my line out of the downrigger clip and made a beeline straight for the surface.

In my opinion, cohos are the craziest of the landlocked salmon species. They jump, spin, wrap around your downrigger cables, slam into the boat, and try lots of other antics that make landing them a high-wire act. To add to the drama, my daughter started going crazy when she realized that a fish was about to come into the boat.

In this case I was fortunate, and my wife netted the fish before it could make a getaway. It was a clean and shiny sixteen incher that I quickly put on ice. My daughter kept asking to touch the fish, so I figured, "You want to touch a slimy salmon? Go right ahead!" I tried to think back to the first time I ever touched a fish, but I couldn't remember.

We tried several spots near Canyon Creek and up the Middle Fork of the Feather River. In typical fashion, the fish went on streaks of biting like crazy and then developing lockjaw. By one o'clock in the afternoon we had our limits, and it was just warm enough for a summer splash.

As usual, my wife took home the big fish honors landing a fat coho salmon that went just shy of eighteen inches. Trolling white hoochies behind Sling Blade dodgers did the trick, as long as we tipped them with small chunks of salted anchovy fillets.

My daughter was dying to swim, so I used the opportunity to test out the 'spot lock' feature on my new Minn Kota i-Pilot trolling motor. It worked like a charm, keeping us stationary like an anchor while my wife and daughter took a dip in the cool 74 degree water. It was a little too chilly for my taste, but a few weeks later at Lake Berryessa I couldn't wait to jump in.

When Father's Day rolled around on June 17, I made my standard choice of activities by fishing the 'Berryessa Beat-down. I came up with the nickname because I always get amped up when see limit sticks of seventeen to eighteen inch monster Lake Berryessa kokanee posted online. But then when I finally get the chance to fish there, it's one of those 'you should have been here yesterday' type of days.

Well, this year I had lady-luck on my side, and the Berryessa beat-down finally got put to rest. We landed a total on twelve kokanee salmon, one nice trout, and lost three fish. The fish we caught in the morning were on the smaller side, and the Berryessa beat-down was looming in the back of my mind. We hit a long dry spell between eight o'clock and eleven o'clock where we didn't have any action besides a swimming break.

Just about noontime I saw one of the rods pumping out of the corner of my eye. I grabbed the rod and said, "It's a nice one" as the fish started peeling line. At first I thought I might be a monster king salmon, but knew it was indeed a kokanee when I saw it tail-dancing on the surface. We had the lunger just within reach of the

net when it decided to burn off about thirty feet of line and leap to freedom.

The pain of losing that fish didn't last long, because the bite between noon and 1:30 pm was on fire. All of the fish were in the sixteen to eighteen inch range, and we quickly filled our limits. Take that Berryessa!

The kokanee salmon at Lake Berryessa just blow me away. They are so fat that you can't even get your hand around them to pull the hooks out. The quality of the fish is well worth the trip, even if you don't end up with a limit stick of eighteen inchers.

The best producers during our summer adventure were trolled Apexes and Hum Dingers in pink and purple hues. For some reason pinks, purples, and blues seem to be the go-to colors for Lake Berryessa. Most of the fish we located on that day were hanging out in the 45 to 65 foot range of the water column near the big island.

By the time I had the fish cleaned and the gear put away, the summer afternoon sun was doing a beat-down of its own. We pulled into a small cove and enjoyed a cool family swim before making the long run back to Markley Cove. Both of the kids fell asleep on the way back to the dock and ended up sleeping all the way home.

Although the days can be long and hot, fishing adventures stick in my mind more than just about any other type of summer family activity. Not to mention that you can cap off the day with a dinner of fresh grilled salmon right from the lake. Picnics...lemonade...fishing - that's what summer memories are made of.



Jack Naves gives his daughter Grace a helping hand showing off a coho salmon she caught at Lake Oroville on June 7th. Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Field Editor.

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