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Fish Sniffer



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Vol. 36 - ISS.23

Oct. 27 - Nov. 10, 2017

SEE OUR NEW BAJA
ROUNDUP SECTION ON
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Huge Stripers On Tap In West Delta

Fall striper fishing on the West Delta is one of my favorite fisheries in California. In between bouts of north wind, calm reigns over the waters, and we get to experience the delta at its finest.

On October 8, I planned a trip to the West Delta with Andre Fontenot of San Bruno. Andre and I have mutual friends, but we have never been able to connect for a fishing trip until now. Andre was curious about my method for catching striped bass, so I told him we would be using circle hooks.

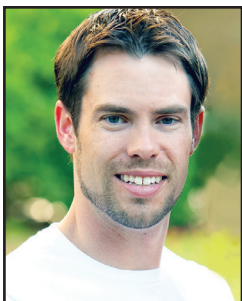
After launching the boat and trolling for a short period of time, we anchored in 24 feet of water on the Sacramento River between Sherman Island and Pittsburg. We got our lines out and immediately started getting bites from sub-legal stripers. The next bite on my rod seemed out of place compared to the taps we had been experiencing.

My rod tip slowly dipped down about six inches and stayed loaded up. The rod tip continued to bob up and down a few inches at a time, never letting up. "Big fish" I said in a whisper tone.

Andre was probably thinking I was nuts, because the rod wasn't pegged to the water. In my experience, I've learned that the smooth, constant bites are usually the bigger fish. As the rod continued to dip, I started reeling at a moderate pace with the rod still in the holder. The rod loaded up, and I said, "Fish on!"

The pressure let up, and I thought I lost the fish for a moment, but then I felt the pressure again and pulled the rod out of the holder. "It's a keeper, get the net", I relayed to Andre. The fish made its way to the port side of the boat, and then made a blistering run way out to the side. "I bet it's a sturgeon", I said as the fish continued to peel line off the reel.

Andre cleared the other rods, and the



GONE FISHING
by
Jack Naves



Andre Fontenot of San Bruno wrangled this limit of quality Delta stripers while fishing with Jack Naves on October 8.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

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Chrome Invades The American River

For the first time in several years, there is a really good run of Chinook salmon on the American River. The last time it seemed worthwhile to pursue the American's fall salmon run was about three years ago. Let's face it, the last few years have been pretty slim pickings.

The other beauty of the American is that it really lends itself to drift boats and bank fishing due to its approachable size. I just so happen to own a beat up old Willie drifter and have a strong set of legs. Jet boats are at somewhat of a disadvantage as the river is on often on the small side

for upstream propulsion, and there is 5 MPH speed limit on the entire river.

There are enough fish in the American this year that we have been finding them in some of the more marginal holding spots. In years when there aren't a ton of fish, it's pretty routine to just pound out the primo spots for one or two fish. The also-ran spots just aren't worth fishing when the river is at 1,200 CFS or when

there aren't many fish around.

However, when the river is at 3,000 CFS and there's an above average amount of fish finning about, it's common to pick up two or even three bonus fish per day in these mediocre locations. It's anecdotal, but when salmon aren't just in the obvious spots but also the nooks and crannies, there's obviously a lot of them around.

Another real bright spot, pun intended, are the constant convoys of fresh salmon entering the river. Fresh from the ocean salmon have been entering the American since about mid-August. A few quiet guides and local anglers have been discretely plying the river for a respectable 2-3 fish per trip.

Many of these fish were Coleman Hatchery strays lured into the American's above average cold flows this season. These fish were determined to be Coleman fish by the wire tag implants found in 25% of all hatchery produced Central Valley salmon's noses.

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For boaters fishing the American, roe is probably the best offering, but plugs work too. Ethical bank anglers will find success drifting roe suspended beneath a slip bobber in the river's deeper holes. This quality king gobbled roe back in late August.

Photo by MIKE MCNEILLY, Fish Sniffer Staff.



WHAT'S HOT
by
Mike McNeilly

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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using

Cal Kellogg - fished Camp Far West Reservoir for bass. Cal used a 7'6" Cousins SSP 750 graphite rod teamed with Abu Garcia Cardinal SX 30 spinning reel spooled with 8 pound moss green Trilene. Using this rig Cal landed and released 11 spotted and largemouth bass to 2 pounds while slow rolling 3 inch smoke colored Yamamoto grubs pinned on quarter ounce darter heads.



Paul Kneeland - fished Pyramid Lake, Nevada with Brian Garcia of Colfax in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught Lahontan cutthroat trout to 5 1/2 pounds using a new Lamiglas Kwik Series 8' light action Composite trigger stick rigged with an Abu Garcia 4600 C-3 level wind reel loaded with 8 lb test Yozuri Topknot flourocarbon line. They trolled a "Tui chub" 4 1/2 inch Apex and watermelon 4" Silver Horde spoons behind Vance's cannonball flashers off the Canon downriggers at 65 to 85 feet deep and 2.4 mph.



Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Fuller Lake off Bowman Lake Road. He used a Berkley Ugly Stick GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 6 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Flourocarbon Coated Line. He tossed out 1/8 oz. Yakima Bait Rooster Tails in Brown Trout, Fire Tiger and Rainbow color patterns and 1/8 oz. gold and black Panther Martins.



Spotlight on Conservation

State Auditor Reveals DWR Broke the Law in Delta Tunnels Planning

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GONE FISHING continued from page 1

fish crossed over to the starboard side of the boat. At this point, the fish made an unstoppable run downstream. In all of my years fishing, I've never been worried about being spooled until that very moment. The fish had the reel down to my braided backing line, and it was continuing to run downstream. There wasn't much I could do to stop it.

Before I go any further, let me explain the rig I've developed for bait fishing for striped bass. I start with a reel spooled with 25 pound test monofilament line. I'm using at least 9 foot long parabolic fiberglass noodle rods. This means they bend all the way down to the reel, looking like a letter 'C' when they are loaded up. I like these because it allows the fish to grab the bait and run for a few feet before the rod eventually loads up and they are hooked.

Speaking of hooks, I'm using Gamakatsu 8/0 inline octopus circle hooks with a straight eye (265418 INLINE OCTOPUS CIRCLE SE). I tie these on a 3 foot long 25 pound test monofilament leader. I tie a snell knot so the leader comes out of the eye on the same side as the hook point. This forces the hook point towards the line when you hook a fish.

To complete the rig I run a sliding sinker above the leader, and load the hook with something strippers love like shad, anchovies, sardines, pile worms, or in this case, chicken livers.

The long limber rods do their job hooking fish, and they are easily up to the task of landing average sized striped bass. However, when really large fish are hooked on these rigs, you are dependent on your line strength and a quality drag to save the day.

I told Andre we might have to drop anchor and chase the fish downstream, but moments later I started gaining on the fish. After about ten minutes, I said, "This fish doesn't feel very sturgeony". It wasn't head shaking, jumping, rubbing in the line, or using any of the normal sturgeon tactics. "It might be a big striper", I related.

I finally had my sinker to the surface, but the turbid water made it hard so see any further than a foot deep. Each time we thought we had a chance to net it, the fish would strip about ten feet of line towards the bottom. After repeating this scene for several minutes, we finally got a glimpse of the fish.



Fish Sniffer field editor, Jack Naves landed and released this huge striper while soaking bait in the West Delta on October 8.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

"It's a big striper!" I uttered in excitement. In one swoop, Andre had the fish safely in the net. Since the circle hook had the fish cleanly pinned in the side of the mouth, I wanted to release the big breeder to spawn some future stripers.

In the past, I've read that it's not good for a fish's survival to suspend a large fish from its lower jaw like we've all been accustomed to seeing in bass magazines.

Because of this, I attached my scale to the net and weighed the fish suspended by the cradle of the netting. The final tally was 24 pounds and 39 inches in length. After a few quick photos, I revived the fish in the water using my fish gripper. Once the pectoral fins were extended and the fish started biting, I released the gripper. The huge bass swam slowly back down into the murky waters of the west delta and out of sight.

Andre and I continued to fish until about 3 pm that afternoon in perfect weather. We ended the day with four fish in the 4 to 5 pound range for the grill, while releasing two other keepers. Days like that are what make me continue to believe that autumn fishing in the West Delta is one of my favorite places to be.

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Carne Asada Omelet, & Brody's First Hunt"

Brody, Eric's Labrador retriever, is on the first official goose/duck hunt of his young life. He's now 6 mos and 3 weeks today; with his gangly legs, he should be a funny sight dragging in a big goose. Hopefully, they'll get some Specks (tasty and smaller – like a big Mallard.).

A few weeks back, Brody went on the absolute first hunt of his life when Eric took him dove hunting. The first time he went to retrieve a dove, he jumped back, startled by the still quivering body. But, soon, his genes kicked in and he retrieved all of Eric's doves as he would've a bumper – like an old pro.

He's so different from Deke. Deke was the alpha of the litter and had a more reserved and wise nature to him; while Brody's got a sweet and slightly silly nature, making him affable to most anyone and especially to kids. He's at his gangling teenager phase right now with his long stilt-like legs and big feet.

I use to think it was slightly sacrilegious to cut fish into unrecognizable chunks. But, as the years have trickled by, I've decided it's alright to cut up your meat however you want in order to achieve the desired meal. If I don't have a small fish fillet to fit my recipe that calls for a thin piece or smaller chunk of fish, I will try and turn whatever fish I have into something resembling the fish I preferred.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," they say. It's not as easy to customize fish (especially cutting fillets thinner); but, with a steady hand and a sharp knife, it's not that hard. Slightly frozen fish is easier to fashion into the shapes you prefer. I've been more often than not cutting Rockfish into thinner slices so that I can eat crunchier, more flavorful pieces.

This past month, I cut up some of

the rockfish into really small pieces and tried out a new seasoning that I had

found that Lawry's makes. Lawry's happens to make a lot of the seasonings that I like; and, years ago, they actually put out a cookbook called "A Fisherman's Cookbook," by Dan Hernandez.

I think I got it complimentary back in the good old days when I actually use to receive free fish cookbooks.

It was nice when I got to use a recipe from other people's cookbooks now and again.

They really came in handy back when the Sniffer had my article twice a month in

every issue.

I had to keep on my toes thinking "new recipe" every single time I cooked fish. Eric would say, "Can we have something other than fish around him someday?" I guess I like fish more than he does.

When I was a kid, we mostly ate only crabmeat from Joe up the street who gave us live crabs from his dad who fished out of the SF Bay. His dad was tragically killed by a very large ship that ran over his fishing boat in the fog out there one night. Eric and I were hoping to get crab this year when he went up to Shelter Cove; but, by time the season up there opened for anglers, the Dungeness had been practically all fished out.

So, this month I'm sharing with you one of the ways I've enjoyed using this new seasoning that I discovered. I noticed it is part of an entire line of Mexican seasonings; so, I'm guessing that it could be carried at Mexican grocery stores. I happened to find it online.

FYI: It's available online in an 11.25 ounce size at Amazon, Walmart, and Jet.com for under \$4.00. You can also find the ingredients in it online at their website if you don't want to buy the seasoning. It's a list of the usual suspects with some cumin, lime, and oregano.



COOKIN' YER CATCH
by Paulette

Carne Asada Fish Omelet

INGREDIENTS

- Mild fleshed fish cut into small ½ -1" size pieces
- Lawry's Carne Asada seasoning
- Shredded Mexican style cheese or cheese slices
- Eggs, beaten 65 strokes with a tablespoon of water
- Green onions, chopped or minced
- Butter

DIRECTIONS

Add a couple of tablespoons of butter to a large non-stick pan, heat to med-high heat, and add in the fish. Stir fry it and allow it to brown. Add in a goodly amount of seasoning to color it and make it tasty. Stir it around until browned and cooked. This should only take a minute or less. Remove to use as filling for your omelet(s).

Heat an 8 inch skillet to medium or medium-low, add in 1 Tbsp. of butter per omelet. Then, add in 2-3 beaten eggs per person. Cover with a lid and let cook for a minute. Check and see if it has cooked through. You want it barely cooked all the way through before you add in the cheese and fish pieces.

Add in 1/4 -1/3 Cup cheese per omelet (shredded Mexican or 1-1/2 -2 slices of cheese, such as Colby-jack or mild, medium, or sharp cheddar). Then, add in about 1/3 -1/2 Cup of fish, depending on the size of your pan and how many eggs you are using.

Turn down the heat and cover the pan again and after about 30 seconds to a minute, sprinkle in the green onion. By then, the cheese should be melted. When the cheese is melted and the fish and green onions are added, slide the omelet out of the pan and fold the other half over as the first half lands onto the plate. This is my favorite way to make an omelet. You can also use a larger pan and slide it off, folding it from both ends, one overlapping the other.

All ingredients are written as per person measurements. This is good as is or served with salsa or Tabasco sauce.

Avocados are good with this too either inside the omelet or served as a salad on the side. I like to put a scoop of sour cream inside the peeled and halved avocado and a spoonful of salsa over the sour cream.

Yum! This makes a nice brunch or lunch or light dinner. As a dinner, this is also good with a side of hash browns. Go for it!

If you have any questions, comments, cooking tips or recipes to share, feel free to write me at: Paulette or Cookin' Yer Catch; c/o The Fish Sniffer; PO Box 776; Colfax, CA 95713-0776.