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Quarry Lakes Map Feature



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Fish Sniffer

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Special Section
Baja Roundup
PG 31

Our
36th
Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

Circle The Wagons For Delta Striped Bass

Using bait is a great way to put fish into the boat when fishing for striped bass. Soaking bait works, but the biggest issue some anglers have is timing when to set the hook. They typically set the hook too soon, and end up ripping their bait off without hooking the fish.

Over the past several years, I've been doing a lot of experimentation with circle hooks. A circle hook looks similar to a conventional J-shaped hook, but the point curls around and aims at the shank. At first glance, it seems like you wouldn't be able to set the hook with these things. You would be correct, and this is where circle hooks deviate from J-hooks. With circle hooks, the hook is pulled into the corner of the fish's mouth by reeling slowly. Instead of swinging for the sky like one of those bass fishing shows, you slowly reel to set the hook.

For hooks, I've settled on Gamakatsu

8/0 inline octopus circle hooks with a straight eye (265418 INLINE OCTOPUS CIRCLE SE). I use a three-foot long 25-pound test P-Line CXX 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. I found this to be the recommended method by a commercial fishing website that had a bunch of test data to support the method.

If you think using circle hooks for stripers sounds crazy, wait until you hear what kind of rod I am using. Long limber rods help to read the bites and load up on the hooksets. Ugly Sticks or

downrigger rods seem to work nicely, but I've settled on the 10 foot "B'n'M West Point Crappie Pole" as my favorite rod. Yes, a crappie rod for stripers. I've caught fish up to 21 pounds on these rods. I like to use 65-pound test braided line for my



GONE FISHING
by
Jack Naves



Jack Naves displays a 9 lb striper he landed using a circle hook in the West Delta.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

mainline, as it doesn't stick to the rod blank as bad as mono does when loaded up on a fish.

As for bait, anything will do, just be sure that you don't block the gap

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Learning From A Bass Pro at Lake Camanche



Stacy Barawed poses with her two best bass caught and at IF'mas with bass pro Matt Frazier at Lake Camanche this December.

Photo by STACY BARAWED.

Like many anglers, I have a full-time job and can't spend as much time as I would like on the water, especially during these winter months as daylight continues to dwindle. So, I make the best of my free time doing as much research as I can to prepare myself for my next fishing trip, wherever that may be.

I prefer video tutorials over reading, so YouTube has been extremely useful to me. There are a handful of pages that I follow, and one of the first that was recommended to me was the channel belonging to Nick Smith, AKA the Informative Fisherman, or "IF" to his subscribers. IF resides in my hometown of Stockton, California, and is fortunate enough to live in the Brookside neighborhood on the western side of the city.

Not only does he have access to a private community lake, but he's

just a stone's throw from the California Delta. With nearly 300 instructional videos, countless documented monster catches, and a loyal fanbase, you can bet he knows a lot about fishing.

Nick also gives back to the fishing community. One of his annual events is IF'mas, which kicks off at dawn with free bass and trout tournaments at beautiful Lake Camanche. The tournaments draw anglers from all over California and the fun continues into the afternoon and evening with a catered dinner, meet-and-greets with Nick and local pro anglers, vendor tables, and a free raffle with thousands of dollars in prizes. One top of that, a small handful of fans are randomly chosen each year to fish portions of the bass tournament with a pro... on the pro's boat!

This year was my year.

Three days before the event, Nick reached out through Instagram, informing me I'd been chosen to fish

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GONE FISHING
by
Stacey Barawed

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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using



Cal Kellogg - fished Folsom Lake and got skunked despite trolling for 9 miles from his Hobie Pro Angler 14 kayak.

Cal targeted trout and kings with his "hybrid" leadcore rigs consisting of Vance's Tackle Rods, teamed with Abu Garcia 5500 line counter reels spooled as follows: 20 lb P-Line braid backing, 3 colors of Suffix 17 lb leadcore and an 18 foot 20 lb test fluorocarbon topshot tipped with a 48 inch 10 lb fluorocarbon leader. Using these rigs Cal employed Hum Dingers, Speedy Shiners, Yo-Zuri L Minnows, threaded worms and Arctic Fox Trolling Flies.



Paul Kneeland - fished Englebright Reservoir with John Brassfield of Auburn in John's 18' Duckworth.

They caught rainbow trout to 13 inches using a Lamiglas Fish Sniffer special 7'6" ultra light graphite downrigger rod with a Abu Garcia Revo MGX Extreme level wind reel loaded with 6 lb test Yozuri TopKnot fluorocarbon line. They trolled Vance's and Sep's Dodgers followed by nightcrawlers topped at 1.5 mph.



Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Halsey Forebay near Auburn.. 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 Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with rainbow Berkley PowerBait, 1/8 oz. gold and black Panther Martins and 2/5 oz. gold/red stripe Little Cleos.



Spotlight on Conservation

State Water Board Approves
Increased Flows for
Lower San Joaquin River
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Kittle's: Outfitting Anglers & Hunters Since 1999!

Kittle's Outdoor & Sport was established in 1999 by Scott and Patrick Kittle. It continues to be a family owned operation located in Colusa, CA.

Kittle's is known throughout California for its large inventory of waterfowl supplies. Being one block from the Colusa-Sacramento River State Park, and near the Grey Life Wildlife Area, as well as the Delevan, Sutter and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges, Kittle's has a vast fishing department and carries live bait. The bass fishing department is second to none.

The employees at Kittle's have a lot of experience with hunting and fishing. It is important for our customers to not only



get the right equipment for their outdoor adventure but also have the right informa-

tion about where, how, and when.

For the hunter Kittle's features everything and anything for the California hunting scene and beyond including, shotguns, rifles and handguns, ammunition, archery gear, black powder guns

and accessories, optics and a full line of clothing to match a broad range of weather conditions.

Of course, for the angler there are hooks and lures, rods and reels, line and everything in between!

Not sure what the sportsman in your life needs, the staff at Kittle's will be happy to work with you or you can purchase at gift certificate, insuring that the sports enthusiast in your life will find the perfect piece of gear!

Kittle's is located at 888 Market St. in Colusa. You can give them a call at (530) 458-4868. Kittle's has an extensive website including a large online store, www.kittlesoutdoor.com.

GONE FISHING continued from page 1

between the hook point and the shank. I like to allow the bait to hang freely from the bend of the hook. Stripers aren't hook-shy, so don't worry about hiding the hook inside of the bait. I've had success using shad, pile worms, sardines, and anchovies, but chicken livers are my favorite when using circle hooks.

When using baits like whole shad or anchovies, the baits have a tendency to slide up the shank and block the gap or foul the hook point. To compensate for this, slide a bait button either side of the bait to pin it to the bend of the hook. With soft baits like chicken livers, just glob the bait onto the hook and secure it with some elastic thread.

Rig up with a typical sliding-sinker setup. Clip on a sinker just heavy enough to hold the bait to the bottom. Typically, two to four ounces will do. Next, bait your hook and cast out. Put the rod in a fixed holder at a 45-degree angle to the sky, and keep the reel in gear with a fairly tight drag.

When the fish takes the bait, and swims off, it will hook itself when the line pulls tight. This is really helpful for kids or beginners who don't have experience with setting the hook at the right time. Just put the rods in holders as if you are trolling and let the fish do the work.

I have a rule that the rod doesn't come out of the holder until the fish is hooked and loaded up. If a bite lasts more than about five seconds, I slowly reel with the rod still in the holder. If the fish drops the bait I stop and they usually come back. Once the rod doubles over, you know you are hooked up and can pull the rod out to fight the fish. The key to circle hooks is that you **DO NOT SET THE HOOK**. Just slowly reel until the fish is really loaded up and clearly hooked.

If you get bit but the fish doesn't take the bait, try dragging your bait across the bottom very slowly a few feet at a time. If you don't get bit, peel out a few feet of line to allow your bait to drift back. Pause for about twenty seconds and repeat. In many cases, the fish will start biting while the bait is in motion. When this happens, slowly pull the bait forward until the fish loads up on the hook. If they drop it, just peel out some line and they will come back.

You'll be surprised at how many times nibble bites you thought were shakers turn out to be big stripers mouthing at the bait without running with it. I think this is the biggest advantage of circle hooks over conventional J-hooks. You will turn unsuspecting nibbles into hookups.

During the winter when the water temperature is below 52 degrees, slowly pull the bait forward whenever you get a tap. The cold water makes the fish less aggressive and they will rarely run with the bait. In cold water, I downsize my baits and use smaller 6/0 circle hooks. Sometimes I will switch over to 3/0 J-hooks when the winter bite gets really slow.

Now that I have switched to circle hooks, I will never go back. I've caught way

more stripers than I ever did using J-hooks and rod balancers. The tips I've outlined here should help you to increase your hookup ratios, especially if you are a beginner or have kids. Try running circle hooks on one of your

rods and compare the results. I hope that you will be just as surprised as I was.

Jack Naves' 8/0 circle hook rig. Notice how the snelled leader comes through the hook eye on the same side as the hook point to drive the hook home.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.



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