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Fish Sniffer

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Feather River Map Feature



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Vol. 38 - ISS.13

June 7 - 21, 2019

Special Section
Catch & Release
Fishing - pgs 6-7



"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

INSIDE Area Reports

The Spring of Big Stripers

I don't get out after stripers the way I used to. Logistically, I just can't get over the hurdles. They are a long ways from my home, and my time is stretched thinner than ever. There are many clichés I can cite, work, kids and lack of funds... etc. I used to have a real fire in my belly for stripers, but now I just enjoy being out on the delta. There's something about that fertile green water and the rolling lush hills of the Lower Sacramento that beckon to me this time of year.

This has been an exceptionally wet winter/spring, and the fishing has been a little off of its usual pacing from what I can see. During the peak of the drought in 2014-15, the striper spawn started as early as mid-February. This year winter extended well into the end of March. The first real signs of a spring bite began somewhere around early to mid-April. The Sacramento side of the delta was blown out. The river was scooting along briskly, and the color was turbid brown at best.

That meant that everybody with cabin fever found their way to the relatively clear waters of the San Joaquin side of the delta. There undoubtedly were plenty of stripers in the off color waters of the Sacramento, but the conditions were poor for targeting them. Suffice it to say that the fishing pressure on the San Joaquin side was pretty stiff early this spring.



GONE FISHING
by
Mike McNeilly

In early April, I found myself trolling amongst the masses on my buddy JW's "stanky" brown Smokercraft. The brown boat started out slow, but we managed to scratch out some quality fish shallow trolling Yo-Zuri's along a flat of witches' hair.

The bite was far from hot, but we ended the day one fish short of limits for 4 guys.

Better yet was the grade of fish we ran into. They were slabs. At one point my rod bent to the cork, and a big fish yanked line off my line counter reel willy-nilly. After a spirited battle, braided line and galvanized treble hooks prevailed in putting the



Mike McNeilly, Fish Sniffer field editor, landed and released this impressive 20 plus pound striper while fishing the West Bank on the Sacramento River during a recent outing.

Photo by MIKE MCNEILLY, Fish Sniffer Staff.

lineside in the net. It was a quality fish of almost 15 pounds.

It's always good to see the captain get in on the action. For many years I have been the guy driving the boat, and now I

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Shad Pandemonium in Downtown Sacramento

I often find myself driving through Downtown Sacramento on Interstate



Big shad like the pair Mick Berklich caught recently provide excellent eating when prepared properly.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

5. I never pass up the opportunity to peer over the rail to see if any boats are anchored up on the river. When I see groups of tightly packed boats in the springtime, I know what time it is. Shad fishing has arrived.

I've always heard of "100 shad days" and kind of rolled my eyes. Is it even possible to catch 100 shad in a day? On May 8th, I learned that not only is it possible, but it is a whole lot of fun.

I met my fishing partner Mick Berklich on the morning of May 8th at the Miller Park boat ramp near Downtown Sacramento. We motored upstream against the ripping current and anchored above the I Street Bridge. With the roar of the freeway in the background, we lowered our offerings using four and eight ounce sinkers to create a spread.

I was trying to explain to Mick that shad usually don't start striking until mid-morning, when one of the rods went down. As Mick battled the first shad of the day, another rod buried towards the



WHAT'S HOT
by
Jack Naves

water - a double to start the day.

We began to realize that 100 shad days really are possible. The fishing was so good that we couldn't keep one or two rods in the water at any given time. We had doubles, triples and even landed two shad on one rod, when both lures on a high-low setup hooked shad. Mick even picked up a nice keeper-sized striper on the shad rig.

For American Shad, I run a high-low setup similar to what would normally be used for surf fishing or ocean bottom fishing. You fish vertical, with a sinker clipped to the very end of the line that rests on the bottom. Eighteen inches above the sinker, there is a ten-inch dropper leader coming off the main line.

A second ten-inch dropper leader is spaced 24 inches above this. You slowly lower the rig down and back bounce it until the sinker rests on the bottom. Once the line is reeled tight, the main line stays vertical and the leaders trail

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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using



Cal Kellogg - made an early morning hike up the North Fork of the American River for spring bass. Cal used a 6'6" medium light Berkley Lightening Rod balanced with an Abu Garcia S30 Cardinal spinning reel spooled with 8 lb. Yo-Zuri Hybrid line. Cal used this rig to work 3 inch grubs rigged on darter heads and 4 inch wacky rigged Senkos coated with crawfish scent Pro-Cure Super Gel. Cal caught two spotted bass and two smallmouth bass. The largest fish was a 14 inch spot.



Dan Bacher - fished the San Joaquin River for stripers with Mark Wilson, Clyde Wands and James Netzel of Tight Lines Guide Service. They caught limits of striped bass to 8 pounds while trolling with 7 foot Mark Wilson Lamiglas rods with Shimano Tekota LC 500 reels, filled with Fins 40g 25 lb. line. They trolled at 2-1/2 to 4-1/2 mph with shallow and deep diving Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnow lures in an array of colors, tipped with plastic worms, on 25 lb. test P-Line CXX leaders.



Paul Kneeland - fished Pyramid Lake on Mother's Day with Bridget and sons Mark, Matt and Peter Looney and Chyna Odum in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught Lahontan cutthroat trout to 6 pounds 10 oz., using a Okuma 9' light action Kokanee Black Rod with a Daiwa Lexa 100 line counter reel loaded with 8 lb test YoZuri Topknot Fluorocarbon line. They trolled "Dill Pickle" Lyman lures and Tasmanian Devils in "Canberra Killer" color off the Canon Downriggers at 10 to 25 feet deep and 2.5 mph.

Fish Sniffer TIP OF THE WEEK

Salmon eggs and stream trout fishing go hand-in-hand. Spring is a wonderful time to reconnect with this age-old technique. Current seams, which are nature's food conveyors, are perfect spots for presenting eggs. The rigging is simple. A small egg hook hidden inside an egg. Fluorocarbon is a definite advantage. Not only does fluorocarbon leader go invisible underwater, but it's heavier than monofilament as it absorbs water and will get your egg into the strike zone faster. - Cal Kellogg



FRESHWATER REPORTS:

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EAST DELTA cont.

San Joaquin side of the Delta, but there are some good scores found on a variety of techniques. Largemouth bass are poised to take off as the reaction bite is ramping up.

Jeff Soo Hoo of Soo Hoo's Sport Fishing out of Lauritzen's Yacht Harbor in Oakley has been posting limits of striped bass on a daily basis, and he said, "The stripers are chewing, and we have found birds working in the San Joaquin, and we have been scoring with hair raisers, P-Line Laser Minnow spoons, or swimbaits. I have been staying in the San Joaquin River as there is no reason to head over to the Sacramento side. The action has been steady throughout the day, and I will be on the stripers for a few more weeks before heading to San Francisco Bay to run a party boat for Fish Emeryville for the summer."

Clyde Wands, shallow trolling expert, was out with Dave Houston and also Mark Wilson, another trolling expert on Thursday, and he said, "We had a good day as we picked up caught 9 keepers on the deep-troll, but there was only a fish here and there. We put 55 miles on the boat running from the Antioch Bridge to Prisoner's Point. Some of the stripers had yet to spawn while others have spawned out. Mark also released a 4-pound largemouth bass that was fat and chunky. It seems like the run is starting to wind down, and although there are still stripers both coming in and migrating back to the bay, the numbers seem less."

Randy Pringle, the Fishing Instructor,



Most of the fish being caught at Almanor these days are rainbows, but there have been some very nice kings in the mix too. This fish was landed on May 15.

Photo courtesy of BIG DADDY'S GUIDE SERVICE, Quincy.

reported an improved reaction bite for largemouth bass with lures that sink while suspending upon the retrieve working best. He said, "The ima Rock N'Vibe Suspend in either crawdad or bluegill is a good option as it will drop in the water column when you pause the lure. The bass are guarding fry, and although we haven't been able to hook any giants recently, we have picked up largemouth

bass to 4 pounds. Ticking the tops of the weeds on the high tide has been the best option, and we are targeting gaps between tules or weeds with gaps. You will need polarized glasses to see the 'mushrooms' which are the umbrellas of weeds underneath the surface. You should cast into the back of the gaps and work the lure through the gap, but if you can't see the mushrooms, you will end up in the weeds. Targeting the open holes has been the way to go. The bite is best on the high to the mid-, but it shuts down on the low tide."

- Dave Hurley

LAKE DEL VALLE

Smallmouth and Largemouth Bite

Is Intense

LIVERMORE – The lake temperature at Del Valle has been in the upper 60's to low 70's, making it perfect weather to come out and fish for bass.

The small and largemouth bite are doing well. Nightcrawlers or Senkos are their favorite bait to chase. You can usually find

them hanging out in the cattails that are spread out across the lake. Try to cast the worms as close to the weed mats as possible. Try fishing the rock points that have a nice drop off to let your worm sink in.

Alternatively, Rat-L-Traps and crankbaits also get the smallmouths and largemouths interested. Many bass are also moving in the south end of the lake. If you are fishing from shore you are going to want to try either to east or west beach swim areas.

The striped bass are moving along the channels that move through the center of the lake. The stripers are balling the bait up and pushing it on shore, so you are going to want to use shad imitations to entice the stripers to attack your bait, flukes, or swimbaits.

Kastmasters work for anglers fishing the sharp points on shore. They love to push the bait they are chasing onto these points. Early morning is the best time to catch the stripers chasing the shad. Alternatively, you can use anchovies as bait to get the stripers. If you are throwing these with a ¼ oz. weight, usually a smaller weight will help the fish take the bait, since they can feel less weight when they pick up your bait allowing them to run with it more.

The sunfish bite has really picked up at the water temperature increases. We recommend casting some red worms or mini-crawlers. You can find the bluegill and crappie around the weed mats near the shores or near the cattails as they are using these structures for spawning.

The trout fishing here is almost gone. As the water warms to above 70 degrees, the trout will move into deeper water. If you plan to target them, be prepared to drop your lure deep.

The catfish bite is good. Their favorite

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WHAT'S HOT

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behind in the current.

To connect the two leaders to the main line, I use small cross lock swivels that help prevent line twist. I like to use the smallest sized Dick Nite spoons in half chartreuse, half-pink. You can leave this rig in the rod holder until they strike, or jig it up and down about a foot at a time.

The jigging can really make a difference when the bite is slow.

At ten o'clock we had landed 39 shad, and decided to move upstream to an inside bend to fish for stripers. At this location, we each fished with one shad rod and one striper rod. We hooked two more keeper stripers, and I lost a big

striper that would have gone double-digits for sure.

Even though we were in one of my striper spots, we still managed to scratch out eight more shad by noon. We had landed a whopping total of 47 shad and 3 keeper stripers! We pulled rods and headed to the ramp to reflect on an epic day of fishing in Downtown Sacramento.

Most kokanee snobs like myself snicker at the idea of keeping bone-filled shad for the dinner plate. However, I have finally discovered the secret of how to cook and clean shad - can them using white vinegar to dissolve the bones. You can either smoke them first, or can them plain. Here is a detailed look at the two different methods.

First off, you will need a pressure canner, and equipment such as glass ½ pint mason jars and new lids. If choosing the smoking method, you will need a smoker and alder chips.

In either case, start by filleting the shad. Remove the large rib bones, dark red fat, and skin, but leave the small bones in place. Next, rinse and pat the fillets dry with paper towels. Then, follow your canner's directions for sanitizing and preparing the equipment

If you are using the smoking method, lightly salt the fillets. Salt about as much as you would if you were grilling fish. Next, smoke the fillets for about 60-90 minutes at 120-150 degrees using alder chips. Don't overcook, just enough to give them smoky flavor. Remove from the smoker and cut the fillets into chunks.

Next, add about ½ inch of olive oil to the bottom of each mason jar. Add ½ teaspoon of white vinegar to each ½ pint jar to dissolve the bones. Pack the jars with the fish chunks, and then top them off with more olive oil so it covers the fish. Remove air bubbles with a plastic knife or tool. Follow your canner's directions for the rest of the canning process.



Fish Sniffer field editor Jack Naves caught several hard fighting shad on his most recent outing including this big fish.

Photo by JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.

This method comes out really good, close to how canned sardines taste. I enjoy this recipe on Saltine crackers as a snack or meal.

For the plain method, cut the raw shad fillets into chunks and pack the jars without smoking or adding olive oil. Add ½ teaspoon of white vinegar to each ½ pint mason jar to dissolve the bones, and top off with ¼ teaspoon of canning salt. Follow your canner's directions for the rest of the canning process. I use the plain shad in tuna sandwich or fish cake recipes - bone free!

The Downtown Sacramento area will see shad action from mid-April through early June, while the upstream reaches of the American, Feather, and Sacramento Rivers will produce shad until at least July. Shad fight great, and make for a delicious snack if prepared right. Now is the time to get out there and get your shad on!

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