

Our 40th Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

# New Melones Producing Largest NorCal Kokanee in Recent Memory

**W**ant to catch an Eighteen-inch Kokanee? How about a nineteen or twenty-incher? In that case, go to New Melones soon, as this year's fish are the largest Northern California kokanee in recent memory. Sure, other lakes like Berryessa can typically produce eighteen inchers in any given year, but you don't average several per trip like New Melones has been producing this season.

During my past three trips, we have managed seven kokanee over eighteen inches, with lots of seventeens and sixteens thrown in as well. I've already seen three pictures on social media capturing kokanee over nineteen inches in length. It's only a matter of time before we start to crack the twenty-inch barrier and beyond.

If you are new to kokanee fishing and think this is normal – think again.

I've never seen anything like it in the fifteen years that I've been kokanee fishing. Only last year's crop of massive kokanee at Central California's Shaver Lake has been able to top it. Despite a limited schedule, I have been able to make two recent trips to New Melones in order to chase its monster-sized landlocked sockeyes.

On Monday, June 19, I got an early



WHAT'S HOT by Jack Naves



Vu Pham of Folsom shows off a fat eighteen-and-a-half-inch kokanee on June 19 at New Melones Lake. Vu was trolling with Jack Naves at the south end of the lake when the fish crushed a gold Hot Spot Apex lure on the downrigger.  
Photo by Jack Naves, The Fish Sniffer

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# Marathon road trip yields six species ranging from wild rainbow trout to Pacific halibut

**S**almon fishing is closed this year on the ocean and California rivers, but that didn't stop Cat Kaiser, operations and events director for the Golden State Salmon Association (GSSA), from having a stellar time fishing at a variety of locations in the north state for an array of fish on a recent five-day road trip.

After spending many months working to organize the association's annual fundraising dinner in Santa Rosa on June 3, the high energy blonde woman was more than



Cat Kaiser, operations and events director for the Golden State Salmon Association, caught and released this gorgeous brown trout while fly fishing on the Trinity River with Ross Wilkerson, fishing guide, in his drift boat this June.  
Photo courtesy of Ross Wilkerson

ready to take some time off to fish. She usually fishes for salmon on the ocean this time of year, but since the season is closed, she fished for other exciting species.

"When I said I was taking a little time off after the Santa Rosa dinner to catch some fish, I had no idea my little 600 mile solo road trip was going to be this good," she reported. "I fished two rivers, two lakes and offshore ocean, with fly and conventional gear, for 6 species in 5 days."

"I caught and released 10 or so rainbows, 15 largemouth bass, 4 steelhead and 1 brown trout, then stocked the freezer with 10 rockfish and 1 Pacific halibut from 275 ft deep, for the cherry on top," she explained.

In addition to fishing, she made a number of stops along the way to visit her friends, staying at friend's houses overnight along with a bus, Batmobile bed, and a couple motels along the way.

She began the trip leaving Santa Rosa the day after the fundraising dinner and staying overnight in Williams after leaving Highway 101 and going over the Coast Range via Highway 20. The next day, she drove up Highway 5 to Redding where she went fishing with expert fishing guide Ross Wilkerson of the Fly Shop in the afternoon.



GONE FISHING by Dan Bacher

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## STAFF TACKLE

### What We're Using

<div>Ernie Marlan fished the beaches of Ventura County and caught several quality sized surf perch. He used a 9ft Phenix Trifecta 6-12lb teamed up with a Van Stall reel spooled up with 20lb FINS Windtamer Braid. The lure of choice was a Calissa Jerkbait in sardine color.</div>	<div>Paul Kneeland fished Pyramid Lake with Mark Kalinowski of Concord in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught Lahontan cutthroat trout to 10 1/2 pounds, using an Okuma 8'6" SST steelhead Rod with an Okuma Cold Water SS line counter reel loaded with 10 lb test Soft Steel line. They trolled 4 inch Silver Horde spoons in orange/chartreuse and Silver Horde and Lyman plugs in white/pink and red dot frog colors, trolling with Canon Downriggers at 25 to 60 feet deep and 2.7 mph.</div>
<div>Dan Bacher Caught rainbow trout in the 14 to 16 inch range at Spicer Reservoir in the Ebbetts Pass Region.. He used a Berkley Ugly Stick GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 8 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with Berkley Tequila Sunrise Power Bait on a #14 Eagle Claw gold treble hook on a sliding sinker rig.</div>	



**FRESHWATER REPORTS:**  
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**SHASTA LAKE**  
**Trollers Are Nailing**  
**Rainbows And Browns**

SHASTA LAKE - Shasta lake is sitting about 12' from crest and 82° surface temperature in the morning. We're starting to see shad balls on the screen and in the stomachs of the fish we catch. Today is the first day of shad balls in the marina.

The trout bite is not wide-open and the early mornings are pretty slow but we are pecking away at them. On some days we are catching multiple limits and on others we are getting 7 to 8 fish not including a few nice browns. We're mostly fishing around the 45' to 50' in depth, but I've got some nice fish in the 70' range. We are going to be getting some really hot weather coming up here and the fish will start to move deeper. We started running silver backed spoons and this is what we are catching most of the fish on. We

are also running a gold or copper backed spoon or flies on just one rod just to change it up just to see if the fish are interested, they are hitting them occasionally so we're sticking with shad imitation lures for the most part. The rainbows are pretty good size sitting around 3 to 3.5 lbs. The fish are starting get really beautiful red meat but with the warmer water we are starting to see some copepods on the fish. Although ugly, this doesn't affect the meat. My wife caught a 9lb catfish trolling 40' deep in 400' of water, it

was quite the fight. King salmon and Kokanee are not really showing up yet. If you really want Kokanee Whiskey Town lake is on fire right now. Most of guys are limited out before 9:00am with the hot colors still being pink and red wedding ring type setups. - Rob Hower, Avid Angler



**WHAT'S HOT** continued from page 2



Isaias Peña shows off a hook-jawed eighteen-inch kokanee landed on June 19 at New Melones Lake. This trophy kokanee hit a purple and silver Hot Spot Apex lure trolled at 28 feet deep in the south end of the lake. Photo by Jack Naves, The Fish Sniffer



This monster 2.7 pound eighteen-inch kokanee was landed on July 2 by Kyle Castle of Roseville. The fish hit a custom micro spinner behind a Wild Thing dodger at New Melones Lake. Photo by Jack Naves, The Fish Sniffer



Nick Castle of Roseville shows off a chunky eighteen-inch kokanee landed on July 2 at New Melones Lake. He was trolling with Jack Naves when the fish slammed a purple and silver Hot Spot Apex lure at 40 feet deep. Photo by Jack Naves, The Fish Sniffer

jump on the drive and met Vu Pham and Isaias Peña at the Tuttletown launch ramp in twilight. We ran south in whitecap conditions and dropped our lines in the shelter of a small cove. The fishing started out slow. Trolling in the shadows of a steep hillside, Isaias's rod got slammed, but it turned out to be a trout. We spun around and Vu put a nice 17-inch kokanee into the boat. As we made our way out of the shadows and into direct sunlight, Vu's rod got slammed again. "It's a big koke!" I relayed, as I watched with net in hand as Vu slowly pulled the fish towards the back of the boat. In classic kokanee fashion, the fish made slow pinwheels approaching the boat until I was able to slide the net into the water. "It's a beast!" I proclaimed, as we peered into the net. I held the fish up to my tape measure. "Eighteen-and-a-half" I announced. About twenty minutes later, it was my turn, and I put my own eighteen-incher into the icy cooler. We planned to be off the water at two o'clock, but with all the big-fish excitement, we decided to push it out into a thirty-minute overtime! The move paid off nicely, as Isaias's rear rod surged down and came out of the downrigger clip. The fish came in rather quickly, but after I netted it, I could tell it was another eighteen-incher. "It's another pig!" I shouted, as the hook-jawed male thrashed around in the net. That fish turned out to be our last bite of the day, but we closed it out in epic fashion with five trout and thirteen kokanee, including three over eighteen inches and two over

seventeen. An epic California limit-stick for sure! A few weeks later, I had another opportunity to make it to New Melones, this time with my Roseville neighbor Nick Castle and his son Kyle on July 2. It was forecast to be a 105-degree scorcher, so we planned on being out of there before one o'clock. We arrived at the lake at five o'clock am and were greeted by placid conditions. We ran Hot Spot Apex lures in the 1.5 size. Chrome or gold shiny stuff seems to be what the fish want this year, so we ran them on all four downrigger rods. Once again, the fishing started out slow. I finally had the first bite of the morning, and just like the previous trip, it turned out to be a trout. We moved northward, and finally started catching kokanee on a long underwater peninsula. All of the bites seemed to come close to shore or in water less than sixty feet deep. The fish were hanging deeper than on our previous trip, with forty feet being the best strike zone. With three kokanee in the box, I took us into a large cove and then circled back towards the peninsula. We hit a high spot, and both of the rear rods pegged down at the same time. "We're on the bottom" I relayed to Nick, so he started to bring his rod in. "There's one jumping way back there" he said, and then he said that he was dragging bottom. I finally put two and two together - we were not hung up on the bottom. "Those are fish!" I exclaimed, and Kyle ran to the back and grabbed his rear rod. Meanwhile, his father Nick brought his fish to the net, a nice sixteen-inch kokanee. His son Kyle's rod was set back really far,

so the fish was tired out and doing pinwheels by the time it reached the boat. "It's a big koke...lift!" I instructed, and Kyle guided the massive fish into my outstretched net. Again, it was another eighteen-and-a-half-inch kokanee, and this one weighed a whopping 2.7 pounds. Minutes later, Kyle's dad Nick had something slam his front downrigger rod, and that fish turned out to be another eighteen-inch kokanee! With back-to-back eighteens in the boat, I had delusions of grandeur that maybe we could get a full limit-stick of eighteen-inchers. As usual, the bite shut down and we pulled lines and moved from the south end of the lake over to the spillway area. We barely had the rods in the water when I hooked up, putting a nice seventeen-inch kokanee into the box. With the heat creeping into the triple-digit realm, we decided to pull lines just after noon and head back to the ramp. With eight chunky kokanee and one nice trout in the box, it had been another successful trip down to Angels Camp. With that many eighteen-inchers coming over the rails, it will be hard to fish anywhere else this summer. Whether you are a beginner, or a seasoned troller, now is the time to make a run to Angels Camp to fish the toasty waters of New Melones Reservoir. The surface water temperature is in the eighties, but the lunker kokanee action is just heating up. August will be the month of the personal best kokanee for many NorCal anglers willing to venture to New Melones. If you make it out, you may see me grinding out there, trying to get my twenty-incher.