

# Lake Camanche Grubbin'

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By Jack Naves



**Jack Naves with a fine Lake Camanche rainbow trout landed on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. The fish hit an orange Sep's scented grub at four feet deep.**

Last December when a friend of mine said he was grubbin' at Lake Amador, I thought he was talking about stopping for lunch in lone. Turns out, he was talking about trolling plastic grubs for trout (who knew?) Until then, I thought grubs were reserved for crappie jigs. I ended up trolling grubs with him later that year and we did pretty well. Since then, I've discovered that trolling grubs is pretty popular at other places like Eagle Lake and Lake Camanche.

I recently scheduled a much needed break from some home remodeling projects and headed to Lake Camanche on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Some recent reports mentioned that the water temperature was in the low fifties, so I figured that the grub bite was going to be the hot ticket.

When the surface water temperatures are in the upper fifties and low sixties, fast trolling Rapalas at Lake Camanche is the way to go. You can cover a lot of water, and trout aggressively hit the lures like runaway freight trains. But when the water cools down, the fish aren't always in the mood to chase Rapalas going two-and-a-half miles per hour around the lake. The winter fish are less active and you have to slow down your presentation to get them to strike. This is where grubs come in.

Grubs do well when trolled between .75 and 1.6 miles-per-hour. These speeds are just fast enough to get the curly tails on grubs to flap in the current. I believe that the tail flapping action is critical to getting fish to strike. If your grub tail isn't flapping in the current, then it's time to re-rig it to get some action going!

Speaking of rigging, all you really need to do is thread a two or three inch plastic grub onto a hook. I like the thin-wire worm hooks that Owner produces in size 1 or 2. There are several companies that make grubs specifically designed for trolling for trout. They come in all colors, and some even come scented right out of the package. Regardless of this, I still like to add a little Pro-Cure krill or herring gel to my grubs. I've done the best using Sep's three inch orange scented grubs.



**The weapon of choice – a three inch orange grub pinned on a thin-wire worm hook.**

In front of my grub, I like to run a four foot long fluorocarbon leader made out of six pound test. Depending on how straight you thread your grub onto your hook, it may roll in small circles. To combat line twist, I like to put a bead swivel or a ball-bearing swivel between my main line and leader. Some people like to intentionally thread their grubs onto the hook at an angle so the grub rolls really fast. I like

mine more straight-on so there isn't much roll at all. It's a good thing to experiment with to see what works the best on any given day.

January 23rd was my first opportunity to fish Camanche this year, and I was pretty excited to get out on the water. I got to the north shore ramp just before daylight. Although it was warm and sunny the day prior, the morning brought a cool mist that glazed the boat with dew. I cruised up the Mokelumne River arm to one of my favorite spots just as the sun cast light onto the surrounding hills. I was fishing on my own, so I used my two-rod license to take advantage of running one top line and the other on the downrigger.

At first light, the surface water temperature was a cool 51 degrees. I ran a small threaded anchovy behind a dodger on my top line. I let it out 100 feet behind the boat and started to let out my second rod which had the orange Sep's grub attached. I hadn't even gotten my second rod into the downrigger when the anchovy got slammed! It was a feisty 13" rainbow that I quickly released at the side of the boat. I let out the grub 150 feet behind the boat and set it four feet deep in the downrigger. When I fish the surface, I use my downriggers as tools to get exactly to the desired depth. They also help to keep the lines separated from the top lines to avoid tangles when fishing with several anglers.



**Waiting for a strike on the downrigger rod in the morning mist. Trolling close to points and shoreline structure can be the key on cold winter mornings.**

A few minutes after the first fish, I saw my downrigger rod tip shaking. I jumped to my feet, almost slipping on the fresh dew (anybody that's fished knows that yeah, I really do get that excited!) It was another pan sized rainbow that had engulfed the orange grub. This fish was bleeding so I quickly put it on ice. For the next couple of hours the action continued, with the orange grub producing most of the strikes. By 9:30 am, the action slowed down so I motored out to the main body of the lake to experiment with trolling Rapalas. I didn't have any luck, so I went back to my spot upriver to finish out the day slow trolling grubs at 1.3 miles-per-hour. I like to troll really close to the shore, focusing on points and variations in the shoreline.

The afternoon bite was pretty slow, so I called it a day at about 3:00 pm. I had landed a total of ten fish, keeping four for a delicious 'Orange Trout' recipe that I like to prepare. The grubs produced as I had expected, and now I was able to head for home with fresh fillets on ice! The fish ranged from between thirteen and seventeen inches in length. Although I didn't hook any lunkers, they were all quality fish. This year infertile 'triploid' trout are being planted into Lake Camanche by management. While I still haven't seen lots of big fish like I did last year, this strain of trout promises to grow into huge trophy-sized proportions over time. This winter, try grubbin' at Lake Camanche – you'll be glad you did!