

Our  
43rd  
Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

# Delta Stripers in Full Spring Swing

As striped bass stage for their spring spawning run up the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, the delta comes alive with trollers looking for fish before they head upriver. While Colusa and Gridley can be great river locations during the spawn, the delta also provides wide-open striper fishing if you can track down a nice school.

When deciding on a technique, keep in mind that trolling is the best bet to cover water and stumble upon a nice group of pre-spawn striped bass. Trolling is exactly what I did this past May 1, and stripers were on the menu.

Vu and Cindy Pham of Folsom agreed to come to my house bright and early on the morning of May 1. At five o'clock a.m., we jetted down Interstate 5 to the friendly confines of Brannan Island State Park. It was still pitch dark as we meandered along the Sacramento River Levee, making it impossible to see how muddy the water looked. We had recently received a lot of rain, and the river back home in Sacramento was as muddy as chocolate milk.

Once launched and on the water, I spun the boat southbound towards the San Joaquin River. This river



**Cindy Pham of Folsom shows off a six-pound striped bass caught while trolling with Jack Naves on April 1. The fish slammed a 'BANANA PEEL' pattern Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnow deep diver trolled at four miles-per-hour. The fish was landed on the San Joaquin River near the Antioch Bridge.**  
*Photo by Vu Pham, Folsom*

system is typically clearer than the Sacramento River side of the delta. This makes it a better bet for trolling, where visibility is a factor. As we



**WHAT'S HOT by Jack Naves**

came off a plane out of Threemile Slough, the San Joaquin River looked crystal clear, and a calm quiet morning greeted us.

The shoals between Threemile Slough and the Antioch Bridge can be a great spring trolling destination. We started trolling shallow with Rat-L-Traps right off the bat, but it didn't work out too well. The tide was too high - once we got into the ideal six-to-seven-foot depth range, we encountered underwater plants that immediately fouled our hooks.

Switching gears, we each clipped a Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnow onto our lines and moved out into the fourteen to seventeen-foot depth range. Running deep divers eliminated the issues with weeds, but we didn't have

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# 11.64 Lb. Trout Tops Lake Amador NTAC

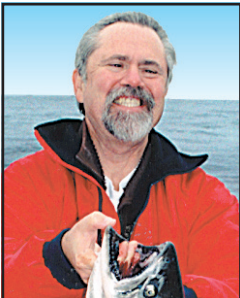
ONE - Lake Amador, located in the Mother Lode foothills, played host to the NorCal Trout Angler's Challenge event on Saturday, March 16.

Daniel De Leon won first place in the adult division with an 11.64 lb. trout caught while trolling a Rapala in the middle of the lake.

His brother, Sam, placed second in the adult division with the 7.56 lb. trout he caught, also while trolling with a Rapala.

"This was a great event to welcome spring with," noted Vince Harris, president of Angler's Press Outdoors, the organization that created the NorCal Trout Angler's Challenge. "There was beautiful weather, lots of families, and a great bite for most anglers - with some really big fish being caught."

David Cohn placed third by catching a beautiful 6.55 lb. trout.



**GONE FISHING by Dan Bacher**

The fourth through tenth place adult division winners in the event were: (4) Arnel Ebojo, 3.62; (5) Luis Sul, 3.44; (6) Tom Wolfenberger, 3.4; (7) Justin Loveall, 3.26; (8) Joe Gaffney, 2.93; (9) Bryce Odenweller, 2.83; and (10) Janet Ellis, 2.78.

Fourteen-year-old Roa Allison won first place in the youth division with a 2.95 lb. trout. The second through fifth place winners were (2) David Grass, 1.33; (3) Mariah Field, 1.33; (4) Conner Perkins, 1.21; and (5) Joey Hill jr. 0.99.

Ten-year-old Alan Mendez won first place in the kids division with a 2.66 lb. trout, while ten-year-old Zion Pearson placed second with a 2.1 lb. fish.

For the complete results, go to: <https://www.anglerspress.com/results/event-results/ntac-results/295-ntac>

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**Daniel De Leon won first place in the adult division of the NTAC event at Lake Amador on March 16 with an 11.64 lb. trout caught while trolling a Rapala in the middle of the lake**  
*Photo by Dan Bacher*

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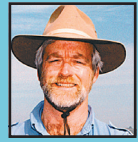
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## STAFF TACKLE

### What We're Using

 **Ernie Marlan** fished the Central Coast beaches for surf perch. He caught and released several quality sized surf perch on 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.

 **Paul Kneeland** fished Lake Camanche with Brian Garcia of Alta in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught rainbow trout to 23 inches and 5.15 pounds using a Daiwa North Coast 8 foot ultralight graphite rod with a Okuma Convector low profile line counter reel loaded with 8 lb test Okuma Soft Steel line.. They trolled 1 1/2 inch Apex lures and trolling flies in black/white/red and green/white, off the Canon Downriggers at 15 to 30 feet deep and 1.6 mph.

 **Dan Bacher** fished for rainbow trout at Collins Lake. 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.



GONE FISHING

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The lake management plants the reservoir with its own unique strains of cutbow, gold, blue and rainbow trout from its onsite hatchery.

Prior to the tournament, Lake Amador Resort stocked a total of 1500 pounds of trout, including 500

pounds of trophy trout ranging from 8 to 20 pounds and 1000 pounds of cutbow and some golds. The trout planted in the lake are a mixture of Amador cutbows, golds, blues and rainbows.

Then on Monday the lake management stocked 1,000 pounds of

cutbows and some golds into the lake. “The water is unbelievably clear and whether fishing shore or trolling, the trout bite is on,” said Lee Lockhart at the Lake Amador Resort.

Successful anglers include Chris and Andrew Bustamante and Isidro Castillo, who put together a stringer of

8 quality trout while using PowerBait. They concentrated their efforts on the small coves along the shoreline, such as the ones past the spillway.

Allan Ruba and Rodney Brow also used grubs and Power Worms in Jackson Creek to catch 2 limits of trout.



Sam De Leon placed second in the adult division of the Amador NTAC event with the 7.56 lb. trout he landed while trolling with a Rapala.

Photo by Dan Bacher



Kids winners at the NorCal Trout Angler's Challenge event at Lake Amador.

Photo by Dan Bacher

WHAT'S HOT

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any action until the Antioch Bridge was almost in view.

ZZZ-ZZZZZZ-ZZ!!! Cindy's rod stabbed towards the water, and we had our first striper of the day on the line! Cindy was able to bring the fish in quickly, and it turned out to be an undersized striper that we released. After one more undersized fish, I decided to pull lines and head upstream.

We trolled the Santa Clara Shoal, Spindrift Marina, and finally hooked another undersized striper at the San Andreas Shoal. The morning was wearing on, and the north breeze added a chop to the water's surface. Fishing was a lot slower than I had anticipated, but the only way to catch fish trolling is to grind on! We trolled south along the Old River Flats, when a large ship came into view from around the corner of Prisoner's Point.

The vessel's name was partially rusted over and flaking away. I squinted to make out the lettering... CHAMPION POMER. "That's a tanker", Vu remarked, as the massive ship motored past us. Not long after the ship cleared out, Cindy's rod once again went off. This time it was a keeper striper that we bled and stored on ice. The incoming tide ended, and the outgoing tide began with a whimper. It was time to move again.

Banking on past success, I made a run down to the area below Threemile Slough once again. Although the spot had only produced two undersized stripers earlier that morning, I remembered doing well at the location on the outgoing tide during previous trips. We let our lures out 75-feet behind the boat and started trolling. I was running about four miles-per-hour downstream with the current, which was steadily picking up. Only a few minutes had passed when Cindy's rod got slammed.

This time, the fish was ripping drag! Vu and I cleared our lines, and I grabbed the net. Every time the fish got near the surface, it bolted deep. "Let it run", Vu instructed, and Cindy lifted as the fish came into view. I scooped the net under what



These magnum Rat-L-Traps and Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnows were custom airbrushed and epoxy coated by the author for delta stripers. The 'BONE' pattern (top) and 'BANANA PEEL' pattern (bottom) have proven to be top producers for delta striped bass. Solid color patterns like these seem to outperform reflective or clear finishes in typical delta water conditions.

Photo by Jack Naves, Fish Sniffer Staff

turned out to be our biggest striped bass of the day, a six-pounder!

I quickly circled around and ran the boat right through the same spot. As I was looking at Vu's rod in the center rod holder, it pumped down hard, and then the clicker started screaming. Vu jumped up and played the fish back to the boat. It was another nice keeper, so I ran through the same area for another pass.

The key to trolling is to cover water until you find a school of stripers. Once you are on them, just keep trolling back and forth through the area until they stop biting. Sometimes you can lock into a 200-yard stretch that will produce several, if not dozens of stripers. It's the big advantage of trolling over other types of fishing techniques.

As I made a wide turn over deep water, Vu and I doubled up on stripers. Those two fish ended up



This tanker class ship, the CHAMPION POMER, powered through the San Joaquin River past the author's boat on Monday, May 1. It's best to steer clear of these beasts and admire their presence as they pass at a distance. The author's crew put a keeper striper into the boat only minutes after this rusty brute passed by.

Photo by Jack Naves, Fish Sniffer Staff

being our last keepers of the day, and they stopped biting right around noon. We had five keepers in the box and had released four undersized fish. It was a solid morning of fishing, and time to head back to the ramp!

As we drove along Highway 160, the Sacramento River's waters looked like coffee with creamer. "I'm glad we didn't run over here and waste our time," I remarked, as the water was too muddy for trolling.

April and May are typically great months to troll the delta for striped bass. As the Sacramento River clears up from storms, stripers will be found there as well as the San Joaquin side. Keep an eye on the reports, and head out before snarling summer winds chase us off the delta until the next fall.