

Fish Topic by Species

Trout

Understanding Trophy Brown Trout Behavior

Brown trout (also known as German Brown Trout) catches are the legendary and fireside tales as well as of the one that got away! These beautiful fish are highly efficient predators and will grow to very large proportions only dependent on the availability of forage and consistent water conditions. California's official state record is 26.8 pounds caught from Twin Lakes, California in the Eastern Sierras, with the world record at 41.7 pounds.

The brown trout is highly regarded as a fierce fighter that has broken many lines, rods, and tackle. Even medium-sized browns are seen as significant catches amongst most anglers. Brown trout are 'meat eaters' by nature and are renowned for prowling in close proximity of the shoreline during early morning hours and as the sun sets to ambush and dine on unsuspecting smaller fish holding in shade protected water. They have a higher temperature tolerance and will aggressively feed along the warmer shoreline more than other species before retreating to their deep, cooler, quiet water lairs.

Browns tend to be homebodies and less migratory than their trout brethren. In general they are more wary than other trout species which helps ensure their longevity in waters where other trout are regularly fished out. Locations that produce browns will usually be productive year after year. When not feeding, big browns are very structure oriented and reside in and around large structures of drop-offs, large boulders, and submerged stumps and trees.

Studies suggest that browns prefer to hold in 47-60 degree water with their peak feeding range 54-62 degrees. As opportunistic feeders they venture out of their comfort temperature zone only to feed, then return 'home' to be sedentary ignoring lures resembling 'food' until motivated to once again hunt for a meal. Their menu will often include larger prey including larvae, crayfish, frogs, newts, and worms. Big bad browns also are known to favor unsuspecting planter rainbow trout and large minnows.

Early morning browns move to the shoreline to seek forage before the sun is bright on the water. As night breaks to dim daylight, trollers long-line large joined Rapalas or Rebels or similar scented baitfish imitations 200' to 300' behind their boat. Assistance from a planer-board, can be a huge asset fishing the shoreline because it won't spook the fish as much as the boat and not as much lined needs to be paid out.

The speed of your troll should be relatively fast, somewhere between 2.5 mph – 3.5+ mph. You need to have your rod in hand and work the lure toward you and then easing it back out repeating this motion over and over. It causes feeding browns to aggressively give chase to it, when the lure suddenly moves away or stalls from the pursuing brown, they will attack it! With your fishing rod in hand you increase your odds dramatically compared to leaving it in a rod holder.

If you want to catch trophy big browns on Lake Pardee, you must make a commitment to fish for them. They are seldom caught by accident. Hiring an experienced guide that specializes in fishing for brown trout will expedite the angler's learning curve. Self-taught trophy brown hunters may sacrifice many attempts of landing their dream catch of a lifetime more often than not.

If you are tired of fishing for truck-trout, try your hand at fishing for brown trout... it will be rewarding! Remember to catch, quickly photograph, and release these legendary fish for another exciting trophy hunting day!

California Triploid Trout

Fishing Lake Pardee a while back, it was heard over the marine radio that a fisherman caught a 'tri-tip trout'... as in steak. He could have been partially right from a size perspective! What the angler really meant to say was that he caught a planted **triploid rainbow trout**. Triploid rainbow trout are named *triploid* because they possess three sets of chromosomes which render them sterile. The triploidy process involves treating normal fertilized trout eggs at the hatchery which causes them to become sterile.

The move to create sterile rainbow trout is in response to a lawsuit filed in 2006 by the Pacific Rivers Council and the Center for Biological Diversity against DFG claiming that DFG's fish stocking operation did not comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In July, 2007, DFG was ordered by the Sacramento Superior Court to comply with CEQA regarding its fish stocking operations. DFG now requires California hatcheries to make available *only* triploid trout which are considerably more expensive to produce due to a higher degree of depredation.

Why is sterile trout desirable? Research biologists contend that sterilization is beneficial to prevent hybridization of native strains of rainbows and cutthroat trout. Also, since they do not spawn, all their growth potential goes to growing as opposed to producing eggs or milt. Many trout die as a result of the stress of spawning so the expectation is that the triploid trout live longer and grow bigger. In addition triploids have ravenous appetites with one fisherman being quoted as saying that he found the entire glass bottle of Berkley power bait in the stomach of a Triploid caught in Utah? (*I do not know if I believe that.*)

By all reports, triploid trout are fast swimmers, strong fighters, taste, and appear to be "normal" trout. So good luck on your next 'trip'!

To Migrate or Not to Migrate? That is the Question - FishBio Fish Report

The fish species *Oncorhynchus mykiss* possesses the ability to express two different life histories (migrating to the ocean or remaining in freshwater), making it one of the most interesting yet difficult species of fish to manage. The resident form, known as rainbow trout, stays in freshwater its whole life, while the anadromous form known as steelhead migrates to the ocean. A few months ago, we reviewed a study that analyzed genetic and environmental factors that influence anadromy in *Oncorhynchus mykiss* and concluded that management plans may be favoring a life strategy of residency over anadromy.

Why does it matter whether a fish migrates or remains a resident, and how do the costs and benefits to each strategy affect the long-term resiliency of the species? Diversity within a species is important when trying to adapt and survive in a changing environment. *O. mykiss* will display greater resilience to extreme environmental changes, such as the current drought plaguing the western United States, if they can maintain a rich diversity of genes and heritable traits.

Both anadromy and residency are valuable traits for the resilience of the species, but each also comes at a cost. As a resident form, a rainbow trout is not exposed to the gantlet of obstacles (such as intensive predation, entrainment in water pumps, or unfavorable ocean conditions) that all reduce the likelihood of a steelhead surviving its journey to the ocean and returning to spawn in its natal stream. However, resident rainbow trout will also mature at an earlier age, while anadromous steelhead are much larger when they mature and have increased energy stores that can lead to improved reproductive success (Kendall et al. 2014).

But even if rainbow trout have lower reproductive success than steelhead in a given year, a residency life history tends to lead to greater survival, which increases a rainbow trout's likelihood of successfully

producing offspring over time. Both strategies have pitfalls, but also ensure that the species will continue to thrive despite environmental changes.

A group of scientists from agencies and universities in Oregon and Washington studied the tradeoffs of different life history expressions in *O. mykiss*. The study included nine different rivers in western North America that support self-sustaining populations of *O. mykiss*, and are not supplemented with hatchery fish. The scientists used rotary screw traps to capture *O. mykiss* migrating downstream from March-July in 2011 and 2012. They sampled about 1,600 *O. mykiss* for the study and measured fish fork-length, removed a small fin tissue sample to later determine the sex of the fish, and collected scales to establish the fish's age.

The key finding was that out-migrating *O. mykiss* (which are presumed to be steelhead) are more likely to be female: on average, 65% of the fish sampled in this study were female. This suggests that size at maturation, which is a key advantage of the steelhead strategy, is more important in females than in males. If a female *O. mykiss* migrates to the ocean, she will have higher viable egg production when she returns to spawn, which comes with increased body size and leads to a higher reproductive success rate.

For males, the limiting factor for reproduction is securing a female, and larger size does not always provide an advantage. Large males may display aggressive tactics in securing a mate, but smaller males may employ sneaking tactics to compete for a spawning female. While a complex array of factors influence whether an individual *O. mykiss* migrates or not, it appears males and females may benefit somewhat differently from each approach.

Lure Fishing Techniques for Spring Trout - Hot Spoon Fishing Tips From The Acme Lure Experts

Spring traditionally marks the opening of trout season in many areas of the country. Warm weather has melted ice on high-mountain lakes. With the little snow we have had in California, it is melting and feeding fresh, oxygen-rich water into streams and rivers and predatory trout start to move out of their winter slumber and feed more aggressively. As the season progresses and water temperatures rise into the upper fifties, fish become more active and come into the shallows in the morning and evening in search of forage. Optimum spring trout fishing season will be short this year in Northern California waters due to the on-going drought, so get out there and fish!

These hungry, aggressive trout are excellent targets for lure fisherman. Because these fish are on the prowl for a moving target, the flash, color, vibration and action of metal spoons -- in the hands of an experienced angler -- will often trigger smashing strikes. During this time of the year it's not uncommon for spoons to out-perform all other baits combined. And after the first few jarring strikes, few spin fishermen will argue the point that spoon fishing is without a doubt the most exciting way to catch trout.

Here are a few tips to make your lure fishing more productive this spring: Trolling is an excellent way to cover ground and locate fish. The venerable Kastmaster® is ideal for trolling because it swims at almost any speed, without twisting line. In the mornings and evenings, troll the shallow side of points and drop-offs. These are natural ambush points where trout can attack prey on shallow shelves and retreat to the cover of deeper water. When fish are up near the surface, tie on a 1/8 or 1/4 oz. Kastmaster with no added weight. When the sun is high later in the day, you can add a small split-shot 24" above the lure to make it run deeper. Keep an eye on your fish finder. When you locate an area with fish, don't be afraid to stop and work the area by casting and retrieving.

Vary speed and depth: Too many anglers fish spoons only one way -- a steady retrieve on the surface. Lures let you cover the entire water column. Let the lure sink for varying lengths of time -- or all the way to

the bottom -- before starting your retrieve. Vary retrieve speed and try adding a "stop-and-start" or "twitching" action. This is often all that's needed to make trout that are following your lure strike. Acme's time-tested Little Cleo® and Phoebe® spoons are ideal for this. Their flutter on the fall and swimming action even at ultra-slow speeds can be just the trick to trigger strikes.

Vertical jig: During the brightest part of the day, trout may be holding tight to the bottom along drop-offs and points. You can still get them to bite lures by dropping straight down and "jigging" the lure vertically. The shape and action of the Kastmaster makes it ideal for this. Try 1/4 oz. or even 3/8 oz. depending on water depth. Lift the lure a few feet off the bottom and let it fall, keeping "in touch" with the lure at all times. Be wary for pick-ups as the lure drops, usually signaled by a subtle "tick" on the line. Every now and then, crank the lure swiftly toward the surface. The idea that an easy meal is getting away is sometimes more than a trout can stand.

Show 'em something different: Too many anglers stick with their old favorite, even when it's no longer working. Often, all that's needed to get "finicky" fish to eat is a change of presentation. Dropping down to a smaller size lure often does the trick. Try changing from a flashy lure to a darker, painted finish -- particularly during the brightest part of the day or in ultra-clear water. If you've been using a slim-profile Kastmaster, switch to a lure like the Phoebe, which gives the illusion of a target for predators. And of course, vary the speed, depth and retrieve style.

Catching Donaldson Trout by J.D. Richey

While I've never been a big fan of the hatchery "round-tailed" rainbow trout that get planted in waters throughout the West, I have to say that the Donaldson strain rainbows of Northern California's **Lake Amador** (and other places) are extremely cool "truck trout."

Donaldson's are a unique strain of trout blended from some of the best attributes of rainbows, steelhead and cutthroat. What you get is a super-fast growing, hard-fighting trout that acts more like a wild one than a hatchery fish. While natural trout mature in 4 years and weigh in around 1.5 pounds, Donaldson Trout mature in two years and can weigh up to 10 pounds.

Donaldson's are the brainchild of Lauren Donaldson, who in 1932 at the University of Washington, began a selective breeding program to create a "Super Trout". His goal was to produce a fish with enhanced size, strength, faster maturity rate, and superior reproductive processes than its natural counterpart. The conclusion of this program, in 1944, was the development of the Donaldson Trout.

I went out with some buddies to Lake Amador to do a little "investigative journalism" the other day — to see what the hype is really all about. While the bite wasn't red hot, we caught enough of these bad boys to become extremely impressed. Not only did the fish fight very well — they burned line and jumped all over the place — but they were also very nice looking. Their fins and tails were in much better shape than the average hatchery 'bow and they were very silver in color (not the usual purple-gray of a planter). We didn't eat any but they looked fat and firm and probably taste pretty decent.

Tips for Late Season Trout—By J.D. Richey

Now that the heat of summer finally seems to be subsiding, it's time to start thinking seriously about fall trout fishing. This is the time of year that the fish begin to feed actively in preparation for the lean winter months to come and that means you can have some outstanding action over the next several weeks.

To help you cash in on the autumn trout bonanza, there are some tips and techniques to think about.

Keep in mind, however, that there are no absolutes in the world of fishing and trout operate on their own schedule with their own agenda. Think of the following more as general rules of thumb with which you can get pointed in the right direction.

Lure Color

When fishing hardware like spinners and spoons for trout, take note of the weather. I like to start with gold lures on cloudy or dark days and silver colored ones when the sun's out. Fluorescent greens, blues and reds work well when you're fishing in deep or off-color water and white can be deadly just about any time.

If you're out trolling bodybaits like Rapalas and Rebels for browns early or late in the day, consider using black lures. I know, it seems strange to use black lures when fishing in dark conditions, but think about the times you've swum in a lake or pool at night. Look up from the bottom and the surface is lighter than the surrounding water. A fish looking up at the white surface can see a black lure very well. Conversely, white bellied lures should be avoided in such situations.

Bait Selection

Fall's the time to keep the power goo in the jar and go with natural baits for trout. Right after the first rain of the season, nightcrawlers can be tough to beat... especially if you fish them near the mouths of tributaries or run-off streams. After sitting dry for several months, streambeds become home to all kinds of terrestrial critters and the initial storm of the season always washes a vast cornucopia of goodies into the lakes. Trout know this and will patrol the areas where these streams enter a lake and nothing gets them more excited than a big, juicy worm.

In October and November, brown trout, brookies and kokanee salmon run up tributary creeks to spawn. With fresh spawn in the water, good old fashioned Pautzkee's salmon eggs (remember them?) become one of the hottest baits around when you fish near creek mouths.

Water Temperature

Water temperature can be a tricky deal in the fall. Early on, when the nights finally start getting cooler and the days shorter, trout get active again. The water temps drop and lakes "turn over", which means the cold water that was down near the bottom of the lake mixes with the surface water.

The cold water acts like an elixir for trout lockjaw and they go on a feeding binge on the surface (note to self: this is a good time to be on the water). Fast trolling (or casting & retrieving from shore) with just about any kind of spoon, plug or spinner will get you plenty of action during the first week of turnover. However, it can get too cold as the season progresses. When the water temps dip into the low to mid 40's, trout get a little sluggish and a slow, gaudy presentation is the key to success. For example, say you were throwing a gold ½-ounce Kastmasters off the bank at Lake X during turnover, and you were consistently catching some nice rainbows. The next week, a cold snap chilled the water to 45 degrees and your honey-hole didn't produce that weekend. You figure the fish moved on to another spot, but they're probably still there... they just needed a different presentation.

I'd switch to a larger, brighter lure and one that performs well at slower speeds (Kastmasters work best at a high retrieve rate). Something like a ¾ -ounce firetiger colored Little Cleo or a yellow/red dot No. 6 Panther Martin spinner... reeled barely fast enough to make it wobble or spin would probably get you back into the action. And speaking of spinners, stay away from lures like Rooster Tail lures when you need to fish slowly, you have to draw a lot of water across its willow leaf shaped blade to get it to spin. In

laymen's terms, you have to crank it in way too fast. Stick instead with French, in-line or Colorado style blades in cold water.

Another thing to consider when fishing later in the season when water temperatures drop is the fact that the fish get more active as the water warms up in the afternoon. That means you don't have to get up at the crack of dawn to tap into the best bite.

Full Moon

In short, avoid fishing when we have one. For some reason, trout fishing goes into the tank around here on a full moon. I'm sure you've heard that the fishing sucks the day after a full moon because the fish feed all night, but that has nothing to do with it, in my estimation. Trout have very sensitive lateral lines along their bodies which help them find prey even during the darkest of nights. They don't need the light of the moon to see by. So, I don't have a real good answer for you, but I do know that if the moon can affect the tides, it certainly do something funky to trout and other critters. Just trust me, trout fishing and full moons don't mix. If you absolutely have to go out, try changing things up, fish later in the day, use off-the-wall lures and work areas you normally don't fish. And you may even want to take a lucky rabbit's foot with you.