

GPFF - McCloud Trip, 10-13 June, 2022 (Fri-Mon) - Fishmaster Rich Miller, (email) rich@ski.org, (home phone) 510-525-8006. (Updated 5/5/2022).

NOTE

This outing is not for beginners or people with serious medical conditions -- the stream access and wading are difficult, and the location is far from medical services. **There is no cell phone reception in the McCloud River canyon.**

RENDEZVOUS AND CAMPING

Thursday night, Ah-Di-Na Campground. 5.5 hrs. from Berkeley. **Approximately the last 7 mi of road (dirt) is very rough in places, and may not be suitable for low clearance cars.** However, driving very slowly in places, I have made it in and out with my Civic many times in the past. Take I-80 east to I-505 north, to I-5 north and continue past Redding, Lake Shasta and Dunsmuir to Exit 736 (CA-89). Turn right onto CA-89E and follow it 10mi to the town of McCloud. Turn right (south) onto Squaw Valley Rd, pass the Chevron station, and continue about 10mi. The road changes name to Hawkins Creek Rd (NF11) and takes you to Lake McCloud. Stay on the paved road that runs south along the west edge of the lake. In 3 miles there will be a sign for Ah-Di-Na. Turn right onto the dirt road, drive uphill to the top and continue down the other side. After about 7 miles on dirt you will see Ah-Di-Na on the left. Camping is first come, first served. We expect to have someone arrive early and acquire two or more adjacent sites. GPFF pays for the camping on this outing. **Look for a GPFF NOTE at the campground payment area for further information.** If we are unable to get campsites at Ah-Di-Na, we will try the overflow campground a little further along the road, and the note will reflect the change. There is also a second overflow campground, sharp left just before the deadend spur to the Nature Conservancy. Elev. 2300'.

We will have a potluck dinner on Saturday night after sunset.

GPFF strongly encourages carpooling. Email me to coordinate rides.

MAPS, BOOKS, ETC

You can view a [topo map](#) of the area online. Use the buttons on the right side of the map viewer to change scale and move around. The Nature Conservancy has a [fishing map](#) of its waters, and CalTrout has a downloadable map showing [the streams in the whole Shasta region](#). There is a chapter on the McCloud in "Flyfisher's Guide to Northern California", Seth Norman, and also one in "Flyfisher's Guide to California", Greg Vinci, both published by Wilderness Adventures Press.

REPORTS AND ONLINE GUIDES

A good overview is available at [TroutSource](#). On the drive up, you can get flies and advice at the FlyShop in Redding (800-669-3474) and at Ted Fay's in Dunsmuir (530-235-2969) -- the people at both shops are friendly and helpful. You can get online condition reports at [The Fly Shop](#).

WATERS AND FLOWS

At Dreamflows you can see the recent McCloud flows recorded at [Ah-Di-Na](#) and [1.2 mi above Lake McCloud](#). On 5/5/2022 the former was 230 cfs. The fly in the Lower McCloud fishing ointment however is the aptly named Mud Creek, which descends the south slope of Mt Shasta and enters the McCloud above the lake. Under certain conditions (low-snow, high summer melt) that have occurred only a few times in the last century, Mud Creek can decrease clarity in the Lower McCloud to the point of unfishability. But, so far this year, this hasn't been a problem.

Upper McCloud River - stocked fish.

Above the private land a few hundred yards below Fowlers Camp, about 6mi E of the town of McCloud on CA-89 - Public access (mostly from 89 and side roads, and especially the McCloud River Loop Road) all the way up to the headwaters. Scenic waterfalls. Bait fishers tend to occupy the large pools, but leave the riffles pretty clear. Very different water from that below Lake McCloud (and indeed, that in the private land below Big Springs, which springs apparently add a lot of water.

McCloud Reservoir - One year, when the McCloud water conditions were challenging, we fished the McCloud Reservoir. It is well stocked with rainbows that eagerly take small olive streamers, such as a Matuka, presented on an intermediate line. One area to try is a narrow bay located on the far side of the lake, accessible by crossing the dam and immediately turning left to parallel the lake.

Lower McCloud River - tailwater, wild fish.

Between McCloud Dam and Ladybug Creek -- Public access. The stretch of this water between Ah-Di-Na and Ladybug Creek is more-or-less accessible directly from the road. The water just below the dam is reached from Ash Camp, which is at the end of a short (now undrivable) spur road that leads south from the dam's east end, or from a

long set of stairs descending from the spur road a little down from the dam. The long stretch of water below Ash Camp and above Ah-Di-Na is a little more difficult to get to, but really not that hard. The Pacific Crest Trail crosses a bridge at Ash Camp and contours the hillside on the right bank of the river, and after about 3mi crosses the Ah-Di-Na road about 0.5mi above the campground. The trail is often pretty high above the river, but there are a few places where it is closer, and from those fishers' trails lead down. One way or another, almost all the water can be fished. Interestingly, because the road from Ah-Di-Na to Ash Camp is so tortuous and roundabout, a brisk walk (no fishing) along the PCT doesn't take a whole lot longer than the drive.

Between Ladybug Creek and the lower sign on the McCloud River Preserve -- Limited public access, catch and release only. From the end of the road past Ad-Di-Na a short trail leads to the preserve headquarters. Angling tags may be obtained at the information board. There are 10 total, half reserved in advance, and the rest first come. Any unused reserved tags become generally available at 10 AM. A good trail follows the right bank of the river about 2.5 mi to the lower open-water sign. Below the sign, and above the upper boundary of the McCloud River Club (a few miles downstream), the McCloud is closed to fishing. If you walk to the Conservancy and find no pass available, try fishing the long stretch of excellent water above, adjacent to the trail in.

HATCHES (from Vinci and Norman)

WESTERN GREEN DRAKE (*Drunella*, horny squat crawler, *D. grandis*, **11-15mm**, *D. Flavilinea*, "FLAV", **7-9mm**). Nymphs inhabit medium to fast water, but spring creeks (eg. Hat Creek) as well. Behavior generally like PMD. Imitate nymph (**medium to dark brown, olive Hare's Ear, Mercer's Poxyback Green Drake**). Emergence occurs when the air is temperate, in slow water adjacent faster nymphal habitat. The duns often emerge subsurface (within 12") as well surface. This is given testimony by the frequent success of wet emerger imitations (**bright green Soft-Hackles**). *Ephemerellidae* are classic surface emergers with long sedate floats in optimal weather (**bright Green Drake Natural Dun**), but the large *Drunella* take an exceptionally long time to get airborne once they break through the surface, and they may make several clumsy attempts. Good hatches can last several hours. The spinner fall may be at night, but if you see it, imitate (**Trusty Rusty**).

BLUE-WINGED OLIVE (*Baetis*, swimmer mayfly, 3-12mm). In almost all trout streams, but especially in cold, unpolluted, alkaline waters. They inhabit almost every microhabitat in the stream except for silt beds; gravel and vegetation are especially suitable. Near constant availability, both as fast-swimming nymphs (**Pheasant Tail Nymph**) and as surface emergers (PTN as dropper, **Quigley Cripple, parachute dun, in olive, with blue-gray wings**). During emergence, nymphs may drift just under the surface for a while before breaking through. They have trouble escaping their shucks in the film, taking a long time and often becoming stuck in the process. Those which do escape may ride the water for quite a distance before taking flight. Dismal weather invites the best hatches of *Baetis* mayflies; look for them on overcast, rainy days, as long as the water temperature is above 40°F. Timing the return of these mayflies as spinners after they hatch is difficult; some may come back within a few hours, while others take a few days. *Baetis* females are among the only mayflies to lay their eggs underwater. The females land near the water after mating and crawl down to lay rows of eggs on the downstream side of rocks, sticks, and other objects. They may slip loose during the process or let go after they finish, and wet fly imitations (**dun winged, olive Soft-hackle**) are effective during this time.

PALE MORNING DUN (*Ephemerella*, smooth crawler, **7-9mm**). Nymphs live among rocks and debris in riffles, runs and flats that have moderate water flows. Nymphs are available if they come free any time of the day, during concentrated behavioural drift in the evenings, and during heightened activity, including swimming, before a hatch (**tiny light olive brown Bird's Nest**). The nymphs, like many other *Ephemerellidae*, sometimes engage in up and down "practice runs" exposing the them to trout during extended pre-hatch periods. During emergence, fish the nymph as a dropper below a cripple (**pale yellow to olive tan Shucked Cripple**), whose husk makes it a bit more supporting, and useful in its own right. The duns are classic surface emergers with long sedate floats in optimal weather (**pale yellow to olive tan parachute dun**). Duns have been reported to emerge subsurface in faster flows. Despite name, hatches any time the weather is temperate. Spinners return to the water within 2 days of emergence. Females often, but not always, drop their eggs from the air above the stream, preferably into riffles. Some females end up on the water with egg sacs still attached. These females are often active and far from spent. True spent spinners usually cause the most feeding activity (**brownish red spinner, eg Trusty Rusty**). Though often seen in the late PM, mid-AM spinner falls have achieved legendary status at many locations.

SPOTTED SEDGE (*Hydropsyche*, net-spinning caddis, **10-15mm**, also LITTLE SISTER SEDGE, *Cheumatopsyche*, **a bit smaller**, but otherwise very similar). Shallow, moderate to fast riffles and runs in most trout streams, large populations in plankton-rich waters (like Hat Creek!). Pherates emerge late PM *en masse* (**yellow, tan, brown Sparkle Caddis, EC Caddis**). Before emerging, *Hydropsychidae* pherates drift along the bottom or just under the surface, sometimes for hours. They then take unusually long to struggle out through the film. Adults oviposit late PM on the bottom in riffles or runs by diving, or possibly on the surface by dipping (**olive Deer Hair Caddis, Lead Wing Coachman, Missing Link**).

GREEN SEDGE (*Rhyacophila*, free-living caddis, **8-16mm**, *R. grandis* **30mm**). Fast riffles in cold free-stone streams. Pherates emerge PM sporadically from riffles or slow water below by swimming quickly up to emerge on the surface (**olive Sparkle Pupa, soft hackle, EC Caddis**). Adults oviposit PM in riffles or runs by diving or crawling below the surface (**olive Deer Hair Caddis, dark Diving Caddis, Missing Link**). When they're done, they let go and dead-drift, floating slowly to the surface.

SALMON FLY (*Pteronarcys*, **30-60mm!**). Riffles and bouldered areas of medium to large streams with moderate to fast currents. Naturals are all black with white tufty gills along the sides of the body. When the water warms in the spring, mature nymphs migrate toward shore, where they crawl out at night and emerge as adults. During migration, fish the banks with slow, shoreward swings (**Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, light AP Nymphs, Riffle Dragon Stone, Bird's Stonefly Nymph, Kaufmann's Golden Stone**). Adults mate in stream-side vegetation. They become available again when they clumsily fall into the stream from overhanging foliage, as they wriggle on the surface during oviposition, and when spent (**huge Stimulator, Warren's Salmonfly, black above, orange below**).

GOLDEN STONE (*Calineuria*, **25-40mm**). Rocky riffles and runs of small to large streams with moderate to fast currents. Naturals are yellow with dark brown vermiculations. When the water warms in the spring, mature nymphs migrate toward shore, where they crawl out at night and emerge as adults. During migration, fish the banks with slow, shoreward swings (**black AP Nymphs, Kaufmann's Black Stone, big Rubberlegs Nymph**). Adults mate in stream-side vegetation. They become available again when they wriggle on the surface during oviposition, and when spent (**yellow, poss. peacock Stimulator, Madame X**).

LITTLE YELLOW SALLY (*Isoperla*, **7-16mm**). High elevation cold-water streams with rocky bottoms and fast currents. Naturals are yellow with dark brown vermiculations. Mature nymphs migrate toward shore, where they crawl out at night and emerge as adults. During migration, fish the banks with slow, shoreward swings (**Mercer's Little Yellow Stonefly Nymph**). Adults mate in stream-side vegetation. They become available again when they wriggle on the surface during oviposition, and when spent (**Clark's Little Yellow Stonefly**).

RESIDENT BUGS (If no hatch-related fishing is working, you can try imitating residents, or just exciting the trout.)

Big stoneflies have multiyear life cycles, so *pteronarcys* and *calineuria* nymphs in all sizes up to, and possibly including, terminal will be resident in the riffles (Pat's **Rubberlegs in dark brown or black, Montana Stone in black or yellow, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear**).

The larvae of the hatching caddis families will be pupating or gone --don't bother with them

Swimmer mayflies are always available, and **crawlers** drift, sometimes inadvertently, and sometimes behaviorally in great numbers, especially in low light.

Don't forget the **midges** when all else fails.

Finally, keep the classical subsurface searching patterns in mind (**Prince, Zug Bug, Bird's Nest, and Pheasant Tail nymphs, olive**, dead-drifted under an indicator, **black Wooley Buggers**, swung).

Use streamers to imitate **baitfish, minnows, and sculpin**, especially in low light conditions.

REGULATIONS

Note by Rich: For the purpose of this trip, fishing below the reservoir, the regs boil down to:

Above Ladybug Ck. Only artificial lures may be used. 2 trout kept.

Ladybug Ck and downstream. Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. 0 trout.

There is no Brook Trout bonus. According to my reading, these regs also apply to any tributaries that enter these reaches (so, for example, Ladybug Creek itself), unless they are separately listed in the Special Regs (which they are not).

Statewide Trout Regulations

5.85. TROUT.

As used in this section, daily bag and possession limits, unless otherwise noted, mean the total number of trout in combination, including but not limited to rainbow, golden, brown, and cutthroat.

(a) General Statewide Regulations:

(1) All inland lakes and reservoirs; and ponds entirely on private lands, except those listed in Section 7.50(b), are open to fishing all year with a five-trout daily bag limit, and 10 trout possession limit.

(2) All inland streams, rivers, and canals, except those listed in Section 7.50(b), are open to fishing from the last Sat. in Apr. through Nov. 15, with a five trout daily bag limit, and ten trout possession limit, with no gear restrictions.

From Nov. 16 through the Fri. preceding the last Sat. in Apr., a zero trout bag limit applies, and only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. In waters where the bag limit for trout is zero, trout must be released unharmed,

and should not be removed from the water.

(3) Exceptions:

(A) All waters in Section 7.50(b), Alphabetical List of Trout Waters with Special Fishing Regulations, are those having regulations different from the General Statewide Regulations for trout.

(B) Brook Trout bag and possession limits may be taken in addition to the statewide trout daily bag and possession limits. See Section 5.84.

5.84. BROOK TROUT.

(a) Open season: All year.

(b) Limit: Ten.

(c) Size limit: Less than 10 inches total length.

(d) Brook Trout bag limits may be taken in addition to the statewide trout daily bag and possession limits specified in Section 5.85.

(1) Exceptions:

(A) Red Lake in Alpine Co.

(B) All waters in Section 7.50(b), Alphabetical List of Trout Waters with Special Fishing Regulations.

7.00(b) Sierra District Rules

(1) All rivers and associated tributaries above Lake Shasta. Closed to the take of salmon.

Special Regulations (McCloud River and its tributaries)

(7.50(b)(G) McCloud River from McCloud Dam downstream to confluence of Ladybug Creek.

Sat. preceding Memorial Day through Sep. 30. Only artificial lures may be used. 2 trout.

Oct 1 through the Fri. preceding Memorial Day. Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. 0 trout.

(7.50(b)(H) McCloud River from confluence of Ladybug Creek downstream to Shasta Lake. All year, Only artificial lures with barbless hooks may be used. 0 trout.