

GPFF - McCloud Trip, 19-22 October, 2017 (Th-Su) - Fishmaster Kirston Koths ,(cell) 510-932-8642), (email) koths@sbcglobal.net (Updated 11/26/2022).

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.** 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, and 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. Elev. 2300'.

We will have a potluck dinner on Saturday night after sunset, followed by a campfire gathering with special activities that will include the usual fishing report technique discussion, stories and live music. **GPFF strongly encourages carpooling.** Email Kirston to coordinate rides.

McCLOUD FISHING TIPS

The famed October Caddis emergence will undoubtedly be in full swing, and those who have witnessed clouds of these 1.5-inch-long flies laying eggs on the water in late afternoon, will never forget it. In years past, when the McCloud has been a lovely glacial blue-green or even slightly cloudy, we still did fine. Sometimes we even did better, as people were able to get closer to feeding fish without spooking them. (You need to be **very** stealthy if you expect to catch decent fish on the McCloud, and remember to move along after every few casts.) **Any** decrease in water clarity can complicate wading, because it is a bit harder to see where you are going. For safety, you should tell someone where you are going to fish, wade cautiously by probing first with your wading staff, and ideally, carry a whistle in case you are lost or incapacitated. Again, we note that this outing is not for beginners or people with serious medical conditions.

For dry-fly aficionados, the McCloud can be surprisingly good. To imitate the October Caddis adult, try a size 8 orange Stimulator on a floating line and a long leader to 5X, especially in the late afternoon. Fish the deep water near the edges, and you might hook a nice rainbow or even a migrating brown over 20 inches. Smaller fish are often taken along the edges in shade during midday on a size 14 Adams dry, or similar.

If you plan to try high-stick nymphing, it works best in riffly water where you can approach fish without spooking them. Also try long-line nymphing with a 10-ft leader using a small clear or white ThinagamaBobber (set 1.5 times the average water depth) and AB split shot a foot above your flies. I generally use a size 8 October Caddis pupa on 4X and a size 18 dark beadhead nymph on a 5X fluorocarbon dropper. This very effective, but tangle-prone rig is not meant to be presented with an overhead cast. Instead, let your setup dangle in the water below you, and just flip it upstream and out for the next cast, using water tension to load your rod. If you are not catching fish, keeping adding more split shot. ***Set the hook if you see any variation in the normal floatation of your indicator.***

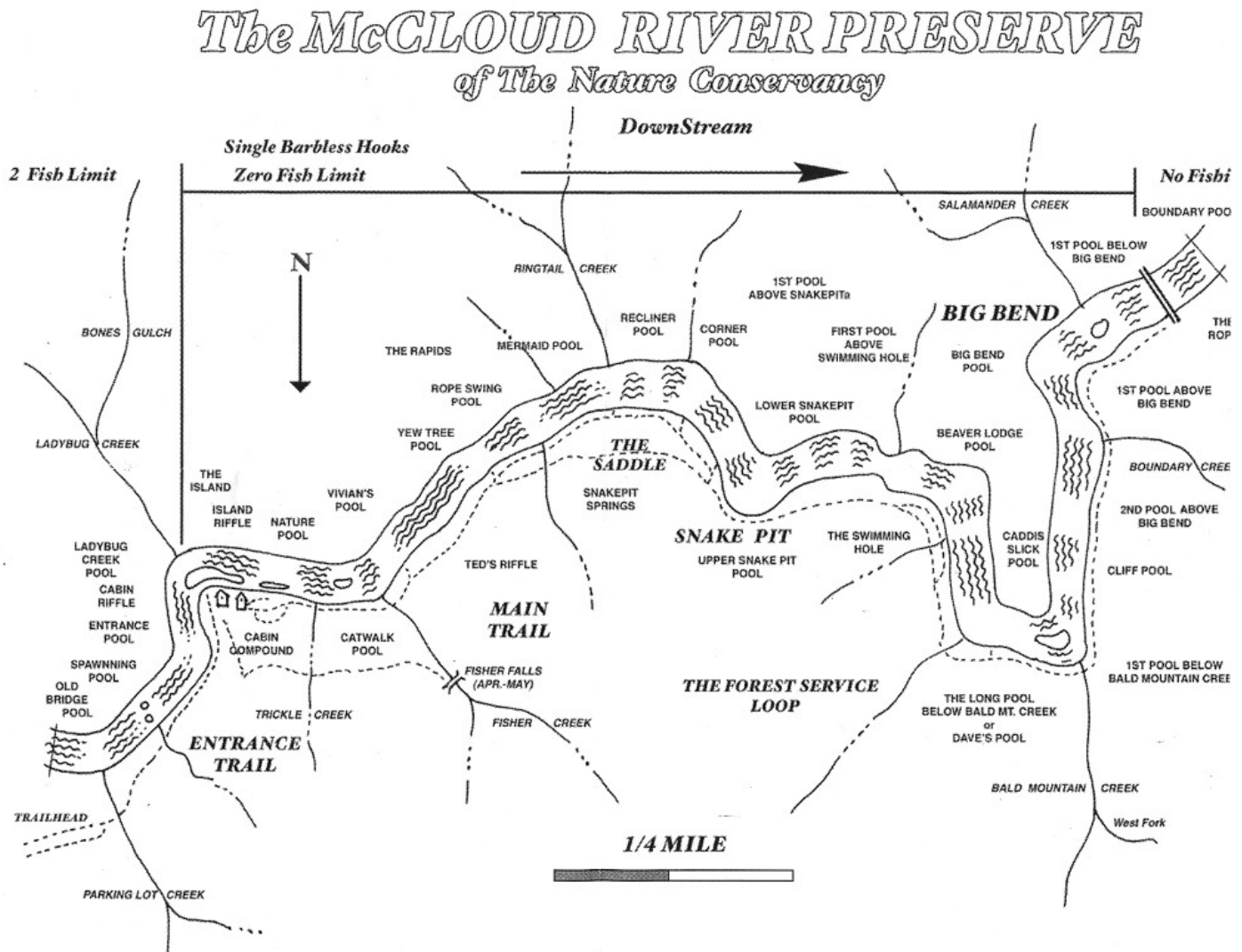
On some occasions, when the water is a bit cloudy from glacial melt, I have switched to streamer fishing with a floating line. Try adding a sinking Versitip followed by a level 5-ft fluoro leader, around 3X, and use spey techniques, swinging or stripping fast through pools and runs for some of the time, especially early and late in the day. To target big browns migrating up from lake Shasta to spawn in the McCloud, streamers should be weighted in size 8 or larger. Try sculpin or rabbit leech patterns in tan, olive, dark brown, or even black, if the water turns cloudy.

Standard flies for the McCloud in fall include the following: Dry fly: Orange Stimulator, size 8. Indicator-fishing: Any dark size 18-20 nymph 12 inches below a size 8-10 Oct Caddis pupae or a large dark stonefly imitation such as Pat's Rubberlegs.

For the McCloud, I prefer white or clear indicators, for extra stealth. Use the smallest size that will support your nymphs and split shot (which should be used liberally). And [here](#) is a fascinating piece by Mickey Wier of California Trout on the rare McCloud Redband, found in the headwaters streams. This is not the McCloud Rainbow, the strain we catch on the lower river.

MAPS, BOOKS, ETC

Here is a link to the [Google Map](#) . 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, Wilderness Adventures Press.



REPORTS AND ONLINE GUIDES

A good overview is available at [TroutSource](#) and another from the [FlyShop](#) (Redding). On the drive up, you can get flies and advice at the FlyShop (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 condition reports at [The Fly Shop](#). There is a short history of Ah-Di-Na [here](#).

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 10/4/2017 the former was 247 cfs and the latter 910 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.

Upper McCloud River - stocked fish, District Rules.

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 accessible directly from the road. The water below the dam is reached from Ash Camp, which is at the end of a spur road that leads south from the dam's east end. The water between 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.

HATCHES

OCTOBER CADDIS (*Dicosmoecus*, slightly curved, untapered case caddis, plant-material early, stone late instars, **25-35mm**). Require streams and rivers with greasy algae covered substrates that persist into Fall, providing plentiful food for the newly hatched larvae. Early instars live in slower water, later ones in fast to moderate riffles. Uncased larvae are unusually prone to behavioral drift (GF) during the daytime in June and July, peaking around 4 PM (**big cream Buckskin Caddis**). In mid- to late summer larvae move to moderately slow, shallow water where they attach their cases to rocks. They many enter diapause to end pupation in a synchronized way. Pherates emerge in the Fall, over a period of 2 weeks at a given location. Late PM to after dark, pherates swim or crawl to exposed objects then out of the water. These pherates are easy prey to trout. Indeed, during the days and weeks of emergence, fish are frequently caught on imitations (**orange body, dark brown wing case, Koths October Caddis Pupa, Fall Caddis Pupa**). Adults oviposit within a couple of days of emergence, late PM in riffles, more often tailouts, or runs on the surface, often touching down hard or wriggling (**orange Dark Caddis, Stimulator**).

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.

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 Miller: For the purpose of this trip, fishing below the reservoir, the regs boil down to:

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.