



Oroville Area Fishing and Outdoor Report

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By Craig Bentley ©2016

Bass continue on a fair bite on Lake Oroville and on the Feather River below town, Steelhead-trout fishing yields fair catches for visiting anglers while locals wait for the reach upstream of Hwy 70 to open on Jan. 1.

Lake Oroville

The Lake surface elevation is 728 feet. The surface temperature is now 56 degrees. The water in the main body is clear with plenty of visibility. Mudlines form off of main body points when there is significant wind. There is more woody debris showing on the lake now and boaters should use caution while running.

The lower concrete launch ramps at Bidwell Canyon, Lime Saddle Marina and the Spillway are open. The Car-top boat access points are all now closed to launching. Boater's may call the lake's Visitor Center at (530) 538-2219, to check the daily status of launch ramps prior to making a trip up to the lake.

The weather this week will be mostly sunny with some clouds. Daytime high temperatures will be from 54 to 61 and overnight lows will be from 39 to 43 degrees. Winds will be north westerly at 5 to 10 mph.

Bass continue on a fair bite on Lake Oroville. The Spotted bass are fattening up on pond smelt for the winter now with plastic worms, small swim baits, lipless crankbaits and tubes all getting bit. Anglers are catching 20 to 30 bass each, in a four to six hour session. Crankbaits, stickbaits and Finesse fishing plastics, are all catching bass up to 12-inches long, with most fish going 13 to 14-inches, up to 3 pounds. Boating bass anglers are also working suspended fish with small swimbaits, jigs or tubes are finding fish between 10 & 50 feet deep. Skirted jigs on ballheads are also starting to take bass from the deeper water.

There are a lot of small fish near the banks, with some slot size fish showing also. Look for bass wherever water is coming into the lake, in the backs of coves where the surrounding water is over 54 degrees.

Drop-shooting small tubes or Keitech minnows, or fishing 5" Senkos, or Roboworms will catch bass. Lipless crankbaits like the Rattletrap are getting bit, both on

the retrieve and the troll. Natural bait fish colors such as Baby bass, Shad and Bluegill catch bass. Earth tone baits, like watermelon, pumpkin, oxblood or brown are also good colors.

King salmon fishing continues to be good for any boaters that try trolling. Angler interest in salmon fishing on the lake has been low. The main body of the lake being uncrowded most days, with few if any boats trolling in the main body, in front of the Dam on weekdays. The Dam, Spillway, Green Bridge, Bidwell Point, Potters Point and the "Slot" have been good areas to troll although fish are being caught everywhere. The catch has been fish averaging 13" to 15", with a occasional fish to 18" caught.

Boaters are trolling lures down from 25 feet to the 55 foot mark to catch salmon. Watch the birds, troll around until you find a good bait ball, and work the water around it. Spoons trolled at 2 to 2.2 mph have been taking fish early mornings, then later blue, green or pearl UV, mini Hoochies tipped with small anchovy chunks are getting bit.

Salmon may usually be caught while trolling over submerged islands or structure, along steep walls or along the face of the dam. The best tactic has been to find bait schools and troll your gear just under the bait. Berkley Power minnows, Apex lures or Hoochies-tipped with a piece of anchovy, rigged behind a medium sized dodger, may be trolled between 25 to 75 feet, at 1.9 to 2.2 mph. Smaller baits are working now with the pond smelt on the lake about 1-1/2 inches long.

Diversion Pool

Releases from Oroville Dam to the pool have been as high as 5600 cfs, at 6 am, then down to around 2600 cfs at 9 am, then back up to 5300 from 4 to 9 Pm. The water is coming from the tunnels at Hyatt Powerhouse and the Kelly Ridge powerhouse when power is being generated during daylight hours, on into the night. The water is clear with plenty of visibility. A few trout and salmon may be active during the day with releases of water from the lake and some nice fish may be caught. Few if any anglers have been out here lately, so no recent reports have been available. Anglers cast and retrieving minnow imitations: soft plastics, stick baits, or spoons, or fish bait for the trout or salmon.

Please note that DWR advises that flows can increase without notice and flows are subject to change throughout the day. No wading, swimming or floatation devices are allowed on this water above the buoy line that normally spans the pool, 100 yards below the spillway.

Thermalito Forebay

No recent reports. Trout, salmon, bass, catfish and other species of rough-fish are present in the Forebay. Some transient trout and salmon that have moved down from the diversion pool to the South Forebay are occasionally caught on bait by patient anglers enjoying the solitude of this little used facility off of Grand Avenue.

Thermalito Afterbay

Pool elevation is on the rise and is now over 131 feet. The water coming in at Wilbur Road Bridge is 51 to 54 degrees and may warm up a little to the high fifties in the late

afternoon in the back coves. The water is clear with a lot of visibility near Wilbur Road and at the 162 bridge and below.

Bass fishing has been slow, but okay at the Afterbay with the continued cooler water. The bank and main shoreline is still exposed some thirty feet beyond the brush and tules. Largemouth were showing best along the western rock wall, near live tules in deeper water with ledges and structure There's fish weighing 1-1/2 to 2 pounds and some to about 17." A four or five pound largemouth may surprise anglers, but most are smaller males.

Boating anglers have been using purple, black and blue skirted jigs, Senko's, Roboworms, chartreuse or white colored- buzz, chatter and spinner baits in and along the rocks, brush piles or near green tules. Drop-shooting small 3.5 cm swim baits, plastic minnows or tubes, off the same areas will also work when conditions are right.

Steelhead fishing has been slow for boaters with only a few trying. Bank fishing has been slow, however, there have been a few anglers fishing at the Wilbur Road canal. The report was that few fish were being caught among those anglers last week. - One fish caught on one day, nothing the next, then one again the next day, so a fish or maybe two caught every other day.

Anglers fishing for steelhead should try pink or chartruese Gulp eggs, or Powerbait eggs with a nightcrawler or scented marshmallow, use a three to five-foot long leader and a sliding sinker setup, or cast soft baits or lures while bank fishing at the Afterbay.

Boaters usually troll with minnow type lures or a threaded nightcrawler behind a dodger, or drift a flylined nightcrawler from the surface down to fifteen feet deep, along the west wall of the Afterbay, on the flats, or on the edges of the channels in front of the outlets, north of the Highway 162 bridge and the mouth of the inlet canal.

Feather River

Water releases to the river are now 800 cfs in the "Low flow" at Oroville, with 1650 cfs being released from the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet, for a total 2450 cfs below the Outlet. The Gridley guage data showed 2263 cfs at the time of this writing, pretty low for safe powerboat operation of boats over eighteen feet in length and driftboats the better option on the river below the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet.

The river remains in a good fishable state with typical late fall water conditions! The water temperature has cooled and is 50 to 52 degrees at station FRA in the Low Flow. Below the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet at station FOW, the water temperature remains at 51 to 52 degrees. Water temperatures will now dictate the type and speed of the angler's presentation to the fish. The water is very clear in the Low Flow and below the Thermalito Afterbay Outlet, it is slightly stained with about 4 to 6 feet of visibility.

Fishing for trout and steelhead in the upper "Low Flow", below Highway 70 is fair. Releases to the low flow are 800 cfs. A number of anglers were on the water last week, boating, wading and fishing for trout or steelhead. Action was reported to be fair with a few steelhead up to five pounds and some trout caught between several anglers. Average about a quarter of a fish to the rod. There are a few adult steelhead over 20" present in the river now and a few may be caught by anglers fishing above the Afterbay

Outlet and below Hwy 162. Feather River Hatchery personnel reported the total of Steelhead returning to the hatchery so far this season is now up over one hundred fish this week.

Fishing with eggs and egg imitations is continuing to produce a few steelhead or trout, as the salmon spawn continues in the "Low flow" with a late push of kings taking their place on the redds. Fly fishing with indicators, egg patterns, flesh flies, San Juan worms and nymphs has been an effective technique for the Flyrodder lately.

Fly fishers should try Glo-bugs, Egg patterns, Troutbeads, Caddis, Mayfly, or Fry patterns, black, purple, or cerise Articulated Leeches, olive, brown, or black Wooley Buggers. For indicator fishing try Troutbeads, Glo-bugs-in size 8-10, or attractor nymph followed by a size 16 or 14 Birdsnests, Fox Poohpah, Prince Nymph, or Soft Hackle Emergers, in green, olive, or tan, also San Juan Worms, in red, bubblegum or tan.

For the spinning or gear angler trying for trout or steelhead on the Feather, try side drifting nightcrawlers with a 4mm florescent red bead, or size 14 Corky, Glo-bugs, single eggs, small clusters of cured roe, Steelhead worms, Berkley Trout worms, or Micetails, on a sliding sinker setup, using a light slinky weight or pencil lead, Maribou jigs or pink worms under a float.

Boat traffic on the river below the Hwy.162 Bridge has picked up. Most drift boaters fly fish nymphs or egg patterns under strike indicators, or swing wet flies or streamers when fishing for trout or steelhead in the Low Flow. Some boaters pull plugs or side drift from drift boats on un-crowded days on the low flow.

* Please note that only hatchery trout (those fish under 16 inches) and hatchery steelhead may be taken from the Feather. Wild fish- (those with an adipose fin) must be released. The daily bag limit is 2 hatchery trout, or steelhead, with a maximum of 4 in possession for two days of fishing.

* The Feather River, from above the Hwy 70 Bridge, upstream to the Table Mountain Bicycle Bridge in Oroville opens to fishing Jan. 1st, 2017 through July 15, 2017 for Steelhead.

* Barbless hooks and a 2016 Steelhead Report Card are required.

* The King salmon season closed Oct. 15th, for the water from the boat ramp above the Afterbay Outlet, downstream to 200 yards above the Live Oak boat ramp at Pennington Road.

* Fishing for the king salmon is closed all year in the Low Flow above the Outlet. There is no allowance for any catch and release fishing that targets salmon when any water is closed to salmon fishing.

* Below the Hwy 70 Bridge, the Feather River is open year around for steelhead, trout, bass, catfish and panfish. Check DFW regulations for species limits, gear restrictions and salmon regulations.

Oroville State Wildlife Area ponds will produce a few bass, bluegill and sunfish for anglers fishing the ponds near weed beds or stickups. Use creature baits, small chatter-baits, buzz baits, plastic worms, or nightcrawlers for bass and red worms or small flies and work them slowly for the bluegill or sunfish.

Hunting

- * Quail season opened Oct. 15 th. Hunters are seeing few birds, with rains keeping the birds roosting.
- * Balance of State Waterfowl season opened October 22nd, fair shooting again last week in the rice fields. hunting will get better with storms or a much needed freeze up north.
- * Pheasant season and the Second half of Dove season opened Nov. 12. Slow shooting was reported.
- * Deer season for Zone D 3-5, Closed Oct. 30th.
- * Shotgun or Bow only, non-lead only slugs/projectiles for shotguns
in the Oroville Wildlife Area
- * Steel shot only in State Wildlife Areas or Ecological Reserves.
- * No Pistols or Rifles are allowed on the Oroville Wildlife Area.
- * See regulations regarding Hunting and area use at Ca. Dept. Fish and Wildlife,
www.dfw.ca.gov/regulations