

Anglers' Guide
to the
LAKES AND STREAMS
of the
BEAR CREEK AREA
FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



Bear Creek Above Kip Camp



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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WATERS
of the
BEAR CREEK AREA
Fresno County, California

This map was prepared by the Department of Fish and Game to guide fishermen to the many fine trout waters of the Bear Creek Area.

Bear Creek is tributary to the South Fork of the San Joaquin River near Mono Hot Springs. It lies entirely within the John Muir Wilderness Area of the Sierra National Forest. The drainage originates in magnificent glacial cirques and bare, ice-carved and weathered granite spires of the Sierra Nevada Crest. It includes over 50 lakes of various sizes and depths, and more than 25 miles of streams. Most are fed by melt and seepage from snow and ice, some of it perpetual. Formerly extensively grazed in summer by cattle and sheep, the basin is now dedicated entirely to recreational use.

ACCESSIBILITY

From Fresno the Bear Creek drainage is accessible by some 87 miles of good motor road via Huntington Lake and Kaiser Pass (elev. 9,175), then by two miles of fair road to Mono Hot Springs. The drive from Fresno to Mono Hot Springs takes about three and one-half hours. From there the heart of the basin, located astride the John Muir Trail, can be reached in about five hours by foot or packtrain over good trail via Bear Dam. The basin may also be reached via the John Muir Trail in about four and one-half hours from Mono Creek near the head of Edison Lake. Another good trail, from the roadhead at Florence Lake via Blayney Meadow and the John Muir Trail to Selden Pass (elev. 10,875 ft.), requires about seven hours by packtrain to a camp area near the mouth of the East Fork of Bear Creek. The trail from Pine Creek Pack Station, Inyo County, to Lake Italy and South Fork of Hilgard Creek via Granite Park and Italy Pass (elev. 12,300 ft.) requires about five and one-half hours, but it is impassable for stock and is normally blocked by deep snow drifts until late August or September.

CAMPING

None of the lakes here described have established campgrounds, although most of those below and even to timberline have reasonably comfortable sites for overnight or a day or two. A few have rustic camps built and maintained by the U.S. Forest Service. Owing to lack of firewood at the higher, rock-bound lakes, camping is not recommended.

The large meadows provide feed for stock for several days and a few of the smaller ones can support several head overnight. There is ample stock feed near the mouths of Hilgard Creek and the East Fork of Bear Creek, at Sandpiper Lake, at Rose-Marie Meadow, and on the East Fork near Seven Gables Lake No. 1.

A campfire permit is a *must* and may be obtained from any U.S. Forest Service Officer or the High Sierra Ranger Station. The Sierra National Forest has published a companion guide to this one. It covers the same area and has many valuable suggestions on camping and conditions of camps, trails, stock feed areas, etc. The Bear Creek Area is yours to enjoy; please help to preserve it in its natural state by maintaining and leaving a clean camp and taking every possible precaution against fire.

LAKE FISHING

All of the Bear Creek drainage was barren of trout until 1914, when some 200 golden trout were transplanted by pack train from Golden Trout Creek, Tulare County, to the stream below Marie Lake. The trout thrived and their progeny spread downstream into the main branch. From there, in 1928, wild golden trout were further transplanted to all principal branches and the main lakes, except for the lakes northeast of the Gables group. The latter were transplanted starting in 1943.

Where the habitat has been suitable the golden trout have established themselves in plentiful supply over the years from the small number originally planted. The Bear Creek drainage is a designated golden trout area and this species is the dominant one present. The South and East Forks of Bear Creek are exclusively golden trout waters. In lakes where natural propagation is insufficient to maintain the fishery, occasional plants are made from limited stocks of artificially propagated goldens.

Descriptive summaries on 45 lakes are included in this guide. These lakes vary in size from one-half acre to 124 acres; together they total about 690 surface acres.



Lou Beverley Lake

Thirty-five lakes and lakelets contain trout populations, as follows:

Golden Trout	26
Golden and Rainbow Trout	2
Eastern Brook Trout	6
Rainbow Trout	1

Of the remaining 10 lakes, 6 which are now barren will be planted with golden trout as conditions permit while 4 are unsuitable for fish and will not be stocked.

Angling in the Bear Creek lakes is normally at its best in September and October. Early morning and particularly the late evening fishing is usually most productive. Early in the season spinning and bait fishing are dependable angling methods, but during the peak months and especially late in the season fly fishing yields much fine sport. The fisherman's hesitancy to try unknown waters has cost him many a nice catch. Many of the smaller and less well known lakes may be reached with a little more effort and often will provide fishing as good or better than the fabled "hot spots".

STREAM FISHING

Bear Creek above and below Kip Camp, East Fork of Bear Creek, Seven Gables Branch, portions of the South and West Forks, Rose Branch, and Hilgard Creek all contain good trout populations and augment the lake fisheries. In the early season, when the streams are high and cold, bait and spinners are best; later in the season wet and dry flies will produce many nice catches. Anglers are urged to fish in Bear Creek and all its branches as much as possible.

TOWARD BETTER FISHING

In cooperation with sportsmen the Department is managing the State's trout fisheries by trying to provide the best possible angling for the greatest number of fishermen. In order to carry out proper

management, accurate information about individual waters is required. This is obtained through special surveys of the lakes and streams.

The principal objective of this work is to learn whether or not a water should be stocked and, if so, in what way. The size of a lake and its richness in natural food are very important, for they determine to a large extent the number of fish which should be planted. Overstocking results in large numbers of thin fish which are too small to provide good sport. Understocking results in a few large fish which are hard to catch. In between lies the happy medium, wherein correct stocking allotments provide maximum numbers of nice-sized fish in good condition.

Examination of the fish present in a lake yields important information to trained observers. Stunted fish indicate overpopulation, resulting from a combination of light fishing pressure and overstocking or heavy natural spawning. The remedy is lighter or less frequent stocking or heavier angler use. One of the purposes of the anglers' guides is to call attention to under-fished areas, in order to increase fishing pressure where that is desirable and to take full advantage of the available trout crop.

Anglers who fish the Bear Creek drainage can help the Department greatly with trout management by reporting any conditions they may observe which indicate winterkill, overpopulation, understocking, poor condition of fish, over-fishing, heavy angler use, or any other problem. Reports should be sent to the Fisheries Management Supervisor, Department of Fish and Game, Fresno, California. The information you provide will help to keep the Department abreast of changing conditions, and will lead to improved fishing.

ANGLING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS

Angling and hunting are permitted in the area in accordance with State fish and game laws. The latest angling regulations can be obtained at offices of the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Forest Service, or from sporting goods dealers.

A good sportsman takes only as many trout as he can use, and uses what he takes. Trout that he can't use he carefully releases and returns to the water. He may even remove the barbs from his hooks to do less damage to the fish he does not intend to keep.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since 1942 the Fresno County Sportsmen's Club and California Department of Fish and Game have conducted annual cooperative lake and stream surveys in the High Sierra in eastern Fresno County. Much of the information in this guide is based on this work.

DESCRIPTIONS OF WATERS AND THEIR FISHERIES

STREAMS

Bear Creek, Main Branch. A splendid trout stream over most of its course. Excellent self-maintaining fishery of predominantly brown trout in section from Bear Dam to impassable cascades and falls a mile below Kip Camp (elev. 8,900). Above here golden trout and golden-rainbow hybrids dominate the stream in abundance; a few eastern brook are present and caught. Nice camp sites in vicinity of Kip Camp.

Bear Creek, East Fork. Excellent self-maintaining fishery of golden trout; fish relatively small, but present in abundance in all fishable portions of the stream between granite slicks, cascades, and falls, from mouth to Seven Gables Lakes.

Bear Creek, Rose Branch. Good alpine trout stream, particularly through Rose-Marie Meadow; fine spawning areas; good golden population (some golden-rainbow hybrids).

Bear Creek, South Fork. Has short sections of excellent trout stream near junction with West Fork and especially above Lou Beverly Lake for about a quarter of a mile; excellent self-sustaining population of golden trout.

Bear Creek, West Fork. Contains some eastern brook and abundant golden trout population through Rose-Marie Meadow; adjacent to the John Muir Trail. A fine trout stream with excellent spawning areas.

Hilgard Creek. A nice trout stream, especially in lower section near junction with Bear Creek. Stream has abundant population of golden (and golden-rainbow hybrids). Off the beaten trail and only lightly fished, it should provide dependable angling.

LAKES

Apollo Lake. Elevation 10,500; 4 acres; over 25 feet deep; fair productivity; poor spawning areas. Planted with golden trout fingerlings occasionally.

Bearpaw Lake. Elevation 11,520; 12 acres; over 25 feet deep; tributary to Ursa Lake; nearly rockbound; at timberline; low productivity; excellent spawning areas in inlet. Golden trout present.

Beartrap Lake. Elevation 11,042; 3.5 acres; relatively shallow; nearly rockbound; near timberline; fair food; no spawning. Planted occasionally with golden trout.

Bearwin Lakes, (West and East). Elevation 9,577; 1½ and 2 acres, respectively; shallow, alpine, partly timbered lakelets; good productivity. Planted occasionally with eastern brook trout, provides excellent fishing.

Big Bear Lake. Elevation 11,450; 11 acres; over 25 feet deep; mostly rockbound; at timberline; fair productivity; tributary to Little Bear Lake; limited spawning areas; fair golden trout population present, no planting necessary.

Black Bear Lake. Elevation 11,650; 15 acres; over 25 feet deep; tributary to Big Bear Lake; at timberline; low productivity; fair spawning areas available in inlet. A few golden trout present.

Brown Bear Lake. Elevation 10,960; 17 acres; deep; near timberline with sparse turfy meadow fringe; fair food; sparse spawning though probably sufficient to sustain lake with light fishing. Has limited golden fishery.

Cirque Lake. Elevation 10,400; 19 acres; possibly 70 feet deep; near timberline in hanging granitoid steep-walled cirque; fair productivity; sparse spawning. Contains large rainbow trout and requires occasional planting.

Claw Lake. Elevation 11,100; 11 acres; over 25 feet deep; near timberline; low productivity; fair spawning areas in one outlet. Limited golden trout population present.

Coronet Lake. Elevation 11,700; 3 acres; possibly 20 feet deep; talus-bound at timberline; poor food; no spawning areas. Occasional plants of golden trout required.

Den Lake. Elevation 11,400; 7 acres; over 25 feet deep; low productivity; sparse spawning areas in small inlet stream. Planted occasionally with golden.

Flatnote Lake. Elevation 10,625; 4 acres; possibly 20 feet deep; near timberline; fair productivity at best; poor spawning area. Now barren, this lake will not be planted unless required by future angling needs.

Gruff Lake. Elevation 11,200; ½ acre; tributary to Tooth Lake; shallow and probably would winter kill; poor food; no spawning areas; barren. Unsuitable for trout and will not be planted.

Hilgard Lake. Elevation 11,400; 5 acres; possibly 35 feet deep; in open cirque near timberline; fair productivity; poor spawning. Requires occasional plants of eastern brook to maintain the fishery.

Italy Lake. Elevation 11,154; 124 acres; deep; near timberline with sparse, turfy meadow fringe; low basic productivity; poor spawning. Large golden and rainbow trout present, supplemented by occasional plants of golden.

Jumble Lake. Elevation 11,486; 9 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; above timber; talus-bound; poor food; no spawning. Barren and will be planted with golden trout if angler use warrants.

Little Bear Lake. Elevation 11,350; 3 acres; over 25 feet deep; tributary to Northeast Branch; near timberline; fair productivity; fair spawning areas at outlet and receives some fish from lake above; good population of golden trout present, no planting necessary.

Lou Beverly Lake. Elevation 10,050; 5 acres; shallow, mostly 3 to 5 feet deep; with wide marginal areas of marsh, encircled by lodgepole pines; good food; good spawning areas in inlet; abundant population of small golden trout present.

Marcella Lake. Elevation 9,760; 4 acres; 15 feet deep; partly timbered (lodgepole) with partial fringe of turfy meadow and some rather extensive marsh; good basic productivity and spawning; contains eastern brook and is entirely self-sustaining.

Marie Lake. Elevation 10,595; 92 acres; over 25 feet deep; near timberline; shoreline mostly rocky, some turfy meadow areas; fair productivity; poor spawning areas. Contains some large eastern brook trout.

Marshall Lake. Elevation 10,400; series of shallow ponds aggregating about half an acre with fair productivity; fair spawning areas in inlets or outlets. Self-sustaining with an excellent population of eastern brook trout.

Medley Lake. Elevation 10,500; a group of more or less connected lakes and lakelets aggregating about 30 acres; depth in some ample, in others insufficient; winter kill occurs occasionally; small turfy meadow areas; fair productivity; good spawning areas, entirely adequate for self-maintenance; fair golden population.

Orchid Lake. Elevation 10,000; 3 acres; over 25 feet deep; fair productivity; spawning areas in inlet and outlet blocked by barriers; occasionally planted with golden. Good population of golden trout in creek through meadow below lake.

Rose Lake. Elevation 10,762; 82 acres; 97 feet deep; rocky but with nice turfy meadow areas about lake; with fair productivity; fair spawning areas but entirely sufficient to maintain fish population; large golden and rainbow trout present.

Rosebud Lake. Elevation 11,050; 1½ acres; possibly 25 feet deep; fair productivity; generally poor spawning areas; barren. Will be planted with golden if angler use warrants.



Sandpiper Lake

Sandpiper Lake. Elevation 10,450; 20 acres; over 25 feet deep, but over half of lake shallow; rocky but about half lake margin turfy meadow; fair productivity; good spawning areas in inlet and fair areas in outlet; excellent population of golden trout present.

Seven Gables Lake No. 1. Elevation 10,700; 4½ acres; near timberline; shallow and rocky; fair productivity; good population of golden trout; spawning areas sparse, kept stocked probably by extensive natural propagation in stream areas above. Good campsite nearby.

Seven Gables Lake No. 2. Elevation 10,840; about ½ acre; shallow; near timberline; low productivity; of little importance; small but ample population of golden trout.

Seven Gables Lake No. 3. Elevation 10,850; about 1 acre; near timberline; low productivity; small but ample population of golden trout; fair spawning areas.

Seven Gables Lake No. 4. Elevation 10,900; 7 acres; near timberline with good depth; low productivity; small population of golden trout; spawning areas fair but sufficient to keep lake amply supplied with trout.

Seven Gables Lake No. 5. Elevation 10,925; 1¼ acres; near timberline; relatively shallow; low productivity; no spawning areas. Barren; unsuitable for fish and will not be planted.

Seven Gables Lake No. 6. Elevation 10,950; 4 acres; near timberline; relatively shallow; talus-bound; low productivity; no spawning areas; barren. Will not be planted.

Seven Gables Lake No. 7. Elevation 10,975; 1½ acres; shallow; talus-bound; near timberline; poor food; no spawning areas; barren; of little importance. Will not be planted.

Sharpnose Lake. Elevation 10,940; 4½ acres; possibly 35 feet deep; near timberline; only fair productivity; no spawning. Occasional plant of golden trout required to maintain fishery.

Spire Lake. Elevation 11,930; 17 acres; possibly 40 feet deep; rockbound; above timberline; poor food; no spawning. Barren; will be planted with golden if angler use warrants.

Stub Lake. Elevation 10,780; 3 acres; possibly 20 feet deep; tributary to creek above Seven Gables Lake No. 1; talus-bound lake near timberline created by terminal moraine; poor food; no spawning areas; barren.

Teddybear Lake. Elevation 10,920; 6 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; high montane; nearly rockbound; fair food; sparse spawning. Requires occasional plant of golden to sustain.

Three-Island Lake. Elevation 10,575; 77 acres; 85 feet deep; a beautiful lake in magnificent setting; glacial; nearly rockbound; near timberline; fair productivity; no suitable spawning areas at lakeside. Occasional plants of golden trout required to sustain.

Toe Lake. Elevation 11,165; 7 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; glacial, rocky; near timberline; sparse turfy meadow; fair basic productivity; no spawning; needs occasional light plants of golden trout fingerlings to maintain small fishery.

Tooth Lake. Elevation 11,150; 3 acres; over 25 feet deep; glacial, nearly rockbound; high montane; low productivity; good spawning areas in inlet accessible for about 200 feet has been planted with golden trout.

Unnamed Lake tributary to Sandpiper Lake. Elevation 11,130; 6 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; high montane, glacial and granitic hanging cirque near timberline; virtually rockbound, without suitable spawning areas for golden; probably fair food. Barren and will not be planted until required by future angling needs.

Ursa Lake. Elevation 11,510; 7 acres; ample depth; tributary to Big Bear Lake; nearly rockbound; at timberline; low productivity; sparse spawning areas in inlet and outlet receives occasional plant of golden trout.

Vee Lake. Elevation 11,050; 50 acres; over 25 feet deep; tributary to Seven Gables Branch above Lake No. 1; nearly rockbound; near timberline. Good population of large golden trout maintained by occasional airplane plants.

White Bear Lake. Elevation 11,950; 3½ acres; over 25 feet deep; nearly talus-bound; at timberline; low productivity; poor spawning areas. Small occasional plants of golden trout are made to sustain a small fishery.



Vee Lake, Looking East



**Leave a Clean Camp
and a Dead Fire
WHEN YOU GO CAMPING . . .**

- Bring out with you everything that you took in.
- If fires are allowed, burn all papers, cardboard, boxes, and other burnable material. If fires are not allowed, carry this refuse out with you when you break camp.
- Open both ends of cans and flatten them out for a less bulky load.
- Bottles and jars are lighter when you leave than they were when you arrived at camp. Take them out with you.
- Don't leave a campfire unattended.
- Be sure your campfire is out when you leave.
- Do not pollute water sources by unsanitary acts.

Keep California Green and Golden