

Anglers' Guide to the MINERAL KING AREA

Tulare County, California



Mineral King Village, Farewell Gap



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Anglers' Guide to Waters of the MINERAL KING AREA Tulare County, California

This map was prepared by the Department of Fish and Game as a guide for anglers to the lakes and streams in the vicinity of Mineral King. The entire area lies within the Sequoia National Forest. The area is bounded on three sides by the Sequoia National Park and because of this has been classified as a federal game refuge and named the Sequoia National Game Refuge (commonly known as the Mineral King Game Refuge). The Mineral King basin lies at the head of a broad elongated glacial canyon. Bordered on three sides by high bare mountain ridges, it drops off on the west down the East Fork Kaweah River canyon to the main Kaweah River and the San Joaquin Valley floor.

Both stream and lake fishing are available in the area. It should be remembered, however, that elevations range from 6,100 to 10,900 feet. All of the lakes lie above 8,900 feet so anglers should be prepared to do some climbing. Good fishing will be found at most of the lakes and in the East Fork Kaweah River as well, from Silver City upstream through the meadow above Mineral King.

At Mineral King proper there is a store where cabins, meals, groceries, gasoline and oil and fishing tackle, fishing licenses and supplies are available during the summer. There is also a pack station where stock can be hired by the day or for longer trips. There are numerous summer cottages between Silver City and Mineral King.

ACCESSIBILITY

Mineral King is a 55-mile drive from Visalia. The last 25 miles from Highway 198 (Junction five miles above Three Rivers) are winding and steep in places but little difficulty will be encountered if one drives with care. From the end of the road at Mineral King and from other camp grounds in the vicinity, Forest Service trails branch out to most of the various lake groups. Each of the lakes can be reached by day trips, hiking or horseback.

Mineral King is also the starting point for hiking and pack stock trips into many adjacent back country areas of Sequoia National Park. These areas can be reached by way of the Hockett Meadow Trail, Timber Gap, Sawtooth Pass and Franklin Pass. The trail south over Farewell Gap leads to the Little

Kern River drainage. This is the native habitat of the rare Little Kern River golden trout, a close relative of the golden trout of the South Fork Kern River. Although other species have been introduced into the Little Kern drainage, the golden trout still exist in some of the tributary streams.

LAKE FISHING

There are 20 lakes in the Mineral King basin. Sixteen contain trout populations while four are too small or shallow to be suitable for trout. The fishable lakes vary in size from a lakelet of ½ acre to 30 acre Lower Franklin Lake and have an aggregate total surface area of over 125 acres. Natural propagation is adequate to carry 13 of the lakes without stocking. The department plants the remaining 3 regularly by air to sustain their fisheries.

Eastern brook trout are found in most of the lakes in the basin and are predominant in 11. Rainbow trout are predominant in 5 lakes. Earlier attempts to establish rainbow in other lakes in the area failed. These waters were either successfully converted to eastern brook trout or were dropped altogether as unsuitable.

Fishing is best early in the season and from late August through October. During the hot weather of July and early August trout move into the deeper, cooler waters. Fly fishing will be fair to poor at best; spinners or bait are generally more productive during this period.

Dams built by the Southern California Edison Company are located on four of the lakes: Upper Monarch, Lower Franklin, Lower Crystal and Eagle. They have increased the size and depth of the lakes, and the water stored has helped maintain the streams in late summer.

STREAM FISHING

Stream fishing in the Mineral King area is limited principally to the East Fork Kaweah River on the canyon floor above and below Mineral King store. This section is relatively open and flat with shallow pools and a winding course. Catchable rainbow trout are planted here and produce some fine catches.

Below Faculty Flat Falls the canyon is steep-walled; cascading falls and deep bedrock pools are common and the going is difficult over slick rocks and large boulders. Rainbow and brown trout are present in this section and are self-sustaining.

Tributary streams from the lake groups are mostly precipitous. They often go dry in late summer. However, the angler should not overlook connecting streams between lakes and the many holes along a stream course as they often produce some good fish.

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East Fork Kaweah River

FOR BETTER FISHING

In cooperation with sportsmen the department is trying to manage the State's trout fisheries to provide the best possible angling for the greatest number of anglers. 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. Over-stocking results in large numbers of stunted fish which are too small to provide good sport. Under-stocking results in a few large fish which are hard to catch. In between lies the happy medium we seek, wherein correct stocking allotments provide maximum numbers of nice-sized fish in good condition.

Some trial and error stocking, with close observation of the results obtained, is often necessary to determine just how heavily a given type of water of a certain size should be planted. This requires periodic follow-up surveys, after the initial exploratory one, to evaluate the results of various stocking rates.

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 Anglers' Guides is to call attention to underfished areas, in order to increase fishing pressure where that is desirable and to take full advantage of the available trout crop.

A knowledge of natural spawning in a lake is also important. Often, when spawning is good, satisfactory angling can be maintained with a single initial stocking of trout, which will subsequently breed naturally and produce all the fish the lake can support. Many of our high mountain lakes, however, have no spawning areas at all and must be stocked regularly if there is to be any fishing. Others are intermediate, requiring occasional light stocking to augment inadequate natural reproduction.

Selection of the most suitable species of trout for stocking in each lake is also important. Eastern brook will spawn in springs and seepage areas around the shore of a lake, while rainbows and golden will spawn only in running water. It is often possible to develop self-maintaining populations of eastern brook in lakes which would have to be stocked regularly if rainbows or golden were used, thereby saving a great deal of money which can be spent to maintain fishing in lakes where no trout can spawn.

Getting the information needed for management of all of our back-country trout lakes is no small task, for there are about 5,000 of them, and each one presents its own separate problems. Anglers who fish the Mineral King area can help the department greatly with the trout management problems there by reporting on the fishing they encountered. Send reports 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 help to improve fishing.

THE ANGLERS' GUIDES

Because fishermen tend to concentrate in points of easiest access, naturally some streams and lakes are fished more heavily than those in more remote areas. This creates problems not only for the condition of the fishery, but in management measures such as stocking for the creel. On the other hand, too little fishing also creates problems as the trout populations of underfished waters multiply out of proportion to the available natural food supply. This results in stunted fish.

It is to equalize this unbalanced fishing pressure that the Department of Fish and Game has introduced Anglers' Guides to some of the more remote areas which in most cases are underfished. As more and more California anglers become aware of the excellent fishing and scenic advantages of the back country, the department hopes that pressure will be relaxed somewhat on the roadside lakes and streams, and that the remote waters will be fished sufficiently to keep the trout populations in balance, with not

too many stunted fish, and not too many big, hard to catch lunkers.

Guides now are available on the following areas:

Marble Mountains, Siskiyou County; Trinity Divide, Trinity, Shasta and Siskiyou Counties; Trinity Alps, Trinity and Siskiyou Counties; Salmon and Scott Mountains, Trinity and Siskiyou Counties; Striped Bass Fishing Map (San Francisco Bay and Delta Area); Emigrant Basin, Tuolumne County; Lake Tahoe, Placer and El Dorado Counties; Huntington-Shaver-Dinkey Lake Area, Fresno County; Mono Creek Area, Fresno County; Bear Creek Area, Fresno County; Humphreys Basin-French Canyon Area, Fresno County; Crown Valley-Blackcap Basin Area, Fresno County; Granite Creek, Madera County; Fish Creek Area, Fresno County; Colorado River, and Salmon and Steelhead Streams.

ANGLING REGULATIONS

Angling is permitted in the area in accordance with State fish laws. The latest angling regulations are obtainable at offices of the Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Forest Service, or from sporting goods dealers. No hunting is permitted in the refuge except for deer and bear under special permit.

A good sportsman takes only as many trout as he can use; he uses what he takes. Trout 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.

CAMPING

Improved campgrounds are maintained by the U. S. Forest Service at Cold Springs Camp below the Mineral King Ranger Station and at Sunny Point west of Mineral King Village.

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. Owing to lack of firewood at the higher, rockbound lakes, camping is not recommended.

Stock feed is not plentiful at any of the Mineral King Lakes, and fishermen using stock should inquire locally before planning lengthy stays.

A campfire permit is a *must* outside of designated campgrounds and may be obtained from any Forest Service officer or at the Mineral King Ranger Station. The area is yours to enjoy; help to preserve it in its natural state by maintaining and leaving a clean camp and by taking every precaution against fire. Users of undeveloped camps are required to pack out all refuse which cannot be burned.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The information in this guide is based mainly on fisheries surveys made by Scott M. Soule, Elden H. Vestal, Lloyd R. Dunham, Earle R. Stoddard, Robert R. Ehlers, Phil Washburn, Daniel P. Christenson and Robert P. Hayden, all of the Department of Fish and Game.

All photographs except the cover and the one of Galena Lake were kindly loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Ray Buckman of Mineral King.

The map was prepared by the department with assistance from U. S. Forest Service and U. S. Geological Survey maps, aerial photos and data from field observations and later redrawn by Cliffa Corson for the Anglers' Guide.

DESCRIPTIONS OF WATERS AND THEIR FISHERIES

Cobalt Lake, Lower. Elevation 9,900 feet; ½ acre; about 15 feet deep; high montane granitic lakelet near timberline with fair food and limited natural propagation. Eastern brook maintain a small fishery without stocking.

Cobalt Lake, Upper. Elevation 10,150 feet; 1 acre; 15 feet deep; high montane, granitoid lake at timberline with fragmentary fringes of turfy meadow. Has fair basic productivity but no natural propagation. Due to low fishery value it is not planted at present. No campsites or firewood in this area.

Crystal Lake, Lower. Elevation 10,788 feet; 11 acres; possibly 40 feet deep; high montane granitoid lake at timberline with fair productivity and adequate natural propagation. Very rocky on all sides but easily fished from shore. Has good self-sustaining population of eastern brook trout. No firewood or campsites; 2¼ hours by poor horse trail from Mineral King.

Crystal Lake, Upper. Elevation 10,875 feet; 2 acres; 15 feet deep; high granitic lakelet at timberline with some meadow fringe. Low productivity and no spawning areas. The lake is barren and present angler use does not warrant stocking.



Eagle Lake

Eagle Lake. Elevation 10,000 feet; 12 acres; 39 feet deep; high granitoid glacial lake; sparsely timbered, rocky, with very little soil or vegetation. Good productivity and fair natural propagation by eastern brooks make this a good trout fishing lake. Average size of trout 7-8 inches. Two hours on horseback via trail from Mineral King.

Franklin Lake, Lower. Elevation 10,327 feet; 30 acres; glacial granitoid cirque lake at timberline; fair food productivity and a good eastern brook producer; self-sustaining. Lake is 2¼-hour ride by good trail from Mineral King. No planting required.



Lower Franklin Lake

Franklin Lake, Upper. Elevation 10,570 feet; 17 acres; 25 feet deep; rocky glaciated terrain above timberline with very little soil or vegetation. Fair food production and sufficient natural propagation to maintain eastern brook fishery without stocking; good population present. Fifteen minute steep and rocky hike from Lower Franklin Lake.

Galena Lake. Elevation 9,625 feet; 2.3 acres; maximum depth 12 feet. A small rocky tarn at timberline with some turf and willows about margin. Limited spawning, periodically planted with rainbow trout.



Galena Lake

Gold Lake. Elevation 9,460 feet; 1.6 acres; maximum depth 7 feet; turf-lined glacial lakelet surrounded by wooded rocky slopes; good food producer. This lake has a fair population of rainbow trout. Natural propagation is sufficient to sustain the small fishery without planting. No improved campsites in the area. Accessible by hiking west from Mosquito Lake No. 1 around the shoulder of the mountain (2½ hours from Mineral King).

Mica Lake. Elevation 9,480 feet; ½ acre; 5 feet deep. A shallow timbered "frog-pond" lakelet just above Gold Lake. The lake is barren, and unsuitable for fish life.

Monarch Lake, Lower. Elevation 10,380 feet; 2.5 acres; 20 feet deep; high montane; granitoid and metamorphic terrain near timberline; good spawning but only fair basic productivity. Contains a good self-sustaining population of 5-7 inch eastern brooks in fair condition; planting not required. Four miles by poor trail from Mineral King.

Monarch Lake, Upper. Elevation 10,638 feet; 16 acres; over 100 feet deep; high montane; granitic, glacial basin at timberline with little vegetation; steep cliffs on three sides; fair basic productivity and adequate natural propagation. Contains an abundant population of eastern brook trout. Reached in 15 minutes by foot trail from Lower Monarch Lake.

Mosquito Lake No. 1. Elevation 8,950 feet; 4.8 acres; 11 feet deep; glacial granitoid cirque in timbered draw with some meadow fringe; good productivity and good natural propagation by eastern brooks. Provides good fishing at times and requires no planting. Reached in 1½ hours by horseback from Mineral King.



Mosquito Lake No. 1

Mosquito Lake No. 2. Elevation 9,580 feet; 6 acres; 26 feet deep; rocky, glacial wooded basin with abrupt slopes to margin of lake; good basic productivity and some spawning. A sparse eastern brook trout population is being converted to rainbow trout with occasional air plants. Reached in 2 hours by horseback from Mineral King. Several good campsites here but stock feed is scarce.

Mosquito Lake No. 3. Elevation 9,825 feet; 1 acre; 9 feet deep; rocky, glaciated, open pocket with scattered timber; subject to winter kill; fair to good productivity; poor spawning but lake stocked from lakes above. Requires no

additional stocking. Fishing for eastern brooks is fair to poor here. Reached in 20 minutes by foot from Mosquito Lake No. 2.

Mosquito Lake No. 4. Elevation 9,925 feet; 4 acres; 16 feet deep; glaciated granitoid bench lake with sparse, scattered timber; lies below granite cirque of cliffs with partial meadow fringe about lake; fair basic productivity and good spawning; good eastern brook population; fishing generally good here. Requires no additional planting. Reached in 30 minutes from Mosquito Lake No. 2.

Mosquito Lake No. 5. Elevation 10,040 feet; 10 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; open granitoid cirque lake near timberline with partial fringe of turfy meadow; good food and spawning. Has good self-maintained population of eastern brook trout in good condition; no need to plant. Uppermost in the chain of five Mosquito Lakes and reached in 3 hours from Mineral King. Foot travel recommended from Mosquito Lake No. 2.

Quartz Lake. Elevation 9,675 feet; ¼ acre; possibly 10 feet deep; high montane, oval, glaciated cirque, near timberline with partial fringe of turfy meadow; poor basic productivity and poor spawning area. Now barren and planting not recommended.

Silver Lake. Elevation 9,620 feet; 4.2 acres; 16 feet deep; high montane glacial cirque in open granite pocket; partial turfy margin; wide shoals; good basic productivity and fair spawning for rainbows. Contains a fair population of rainbows 6-12 inches. No need to plant with present light angler use.

White Chief Lake. Elevation 10,390 feet; 3.2 acres; 17 feet deep; granitoid, glacial cirque above timberline with steep cliffs on 3 sides; some turf about margin; fair basic productivity with very little spawning. Eastern brook trout population converted to rainbow trout for variety with occasional airplant of fingerlings. Reached by 2½ miles of good trail then ½ mile of very steep climbing up rocky cliff to the lake.