

Anglers' Guide

to the

LAKES AND STREAMS

of the

MONO CREEK AREA

FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



Lake No. 2, Pioneer Basin



THE RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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Fresno County, California

This map was prepared by the Department of Fish and Game as a guide for anglers to the alpine trout waters within some 60 square miles of wilderness area in the Mono Creek drainage.

Mono Creek is tributary to the South Fork San Joaquin River. Its watershed originates in the rugged glaciated granitic cirques and windswept peaks of the Sierra Nevada crest in northeastern Fresno County. It then descends in a southwesterly course to join eventually with the South Fork about 8 miles below Vermilion Valley and Thomas A. Edison Lake. The entire basin lies between the Fish Creek drainage on the north and the Bear Creek drainage on the south, and is within the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest. There are some 48 waters here where the angler may have his choice of stream or lake fishing for brown, rainbow, eastern brook or golden trout. Many of the least known lakes have good populations of trout and should not be overlooked.

ACCESSIBILITY

From Inyo-Mono and Highway 395 the Mono Creek drainage is accessible by two main routes, both about 32 miles north of Bishop. The trail from upper Rock Creek crosses Mono Pass and courses the full length of Mono Creek through the heart of the lake country. From McGee Creek the trail winds over Hopkins Pass, then descends into Hopkins Creek and the Mono Creek Basin.

From Fresno the drainage is accessible by some 90 miles of motor road via Huntington Lake and Mono Hot Springs to Edison Lake. From there a good trail via Vermilion Valley parallels Mono Creek to its head, joining the Muir Trail for a short distance near the North Fork of Mono Creek.

CAMPING

None of the lakes have established Forest Service camp grounds, although many of those below and even to timberline have reasonably comfortable sites for overnight or a day or two. A number have good camps built up and maintained over a period of years by packers, and by anglers and hunters. Some fine camping spots will also be found along Mono Creek and along the North Fork.

Larger meadows provide feed for stock for several days. Smaller ones will support only a few head overnight. Stock feed in moderate amounts will also be found in Pioneer Basin, along Second Recess, Laurel and Hopkins Creeks and at a few places along Mono Creek.

A campfire permit is required of all campers in national forests. It may be obtained from any Forest Service officer or ranger station. The area is yours to enjoy. Please help to preserve it in its natural state by maintaining and leaving a clean camp and, above all, taking every precaution against fire.

LAKE FISHING

Many of the lakes in the Mono Creek drainage originally had no trout. Where the habitat is suitable, trout have become established as a result of plantings by the Department of Fish and Game. It is the policy of the department to plant regularly those lakes where natural propagation is inadequate to maintain the fishery.

The basin contains 48 waters, of which 39 are lakes. These vary from one-fourth acre to 70 acres (Grinnell Lake), totaling about 410 acres. Several of the small remote lakes shown on the map have been excluded from the descriptions and total count as they are unsuitable for fish life.

Thirty-one lakes contain trout populations as follows:

Golden	10
Rainbow	4
Golden and rainbow	2
Eastern brook	9
Golden and eastern brook	1
Rainbow and eastern brook	3
All species (above)	2

Twelve of these lakes with fisheries are known to be self-sustaining and need no further plants. Nineteen are planted periodically to maintain their fisheries.

STREAM FISHING

As in other High Sierra drainages the stream fisheries augment the lake fisheries significantly. Nice trout populations exist in Mono Creek, North Fork Mono Creek, Laurel Creek, Pioneer Creek, Hopkins Creek, Second and Third Recess Creeks and in other smaller streams. We suggest that anglers take full advantage of these fishing opportunities.

The lower ends of many of these streams are steep or cascading but they generally level out after the initial climb from the canyon floor. The angler who makes the climb will find some fine fishing available.

ANGLING REGULATIONS

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

A good sportsman takes only as many trout as he can use and uses what he takes. He carefully releases trout he can't use and returns them 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.

TOWARD 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 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.

An important objective of this work is to learn whether and how we should stock a water. 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 stunted 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.

Some trial and error stocking, with close observation of the results obtained, is often necessary to determine just how heavily a lake or stream should be planted. This requires periodic follow-up surveys to evaluate the results.

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 with overstocking, heavy natural spawning, or both. 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 so that full advantage may be taken of the available trout crop.

NATURAL SPAWNING

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 vital, too. Eastern brook will spawn in springs and seepage areas around the shore of a lake, but rainbows and golden will spawn only in running water. It often is 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 back country trout lakes is no small task, for there are about 5,000 of them, and each one presents its own separate problem. Anglers who fish the Mono Creek area can help the

department greatly with trout management by reporting any conditions they observe which indicate winter-kill, over-population, under-stocking, 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. Information you provide will help to keep the department abreast of changing conditions, and will lead to improved fishing.

ANGLERS' GUIDES

Fishermen tend to concentrate in points of easy access. This means that some streams and lakes are fished many times more heavily than those in more remote areas. To equalize this unbalanced fishing pressure the Department of Fish and Game has introduced anglers' guides to some of the more remote areas which in most cases are underfished.

Other guides have also been prepared to recreation areas in less remote areas.

Guides are now available on the following areas: Marble Mountains, Siskiyou County; Trinity Divide, Trinity, Shasta and Siskiyou Counties; Salmon and Scott Mountains, Siskiyou and Trinity Counties; Striped Bass Fishing Map (San Francisco Bay and Delta Area); Granite Creek, Madera County; Fish Creek Area, Fresno County; Bear Creek Area, Fresno County; Humphreys Basin-French Canyon Area, Fresno County; Crown Valley-Blackcap Basin Area, Fresno County; Mineral King, Tulare County; Lake Tahoe, Placer and El Dorado County; Upper Bishop, Inyo County; and Salmon and Steelhead, Central and Northern California.

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. The information in this guide is based on this work, and on the surveys of Department Biologists.

The field survey map was based on aerial photographs and field observations and was redrawn by Cliffla Corson for this anglers' guide.

DESCRIPTION OF WATERS AND
THEIR FISHERIES

Bighorn Lake. Elev. 10,820; 15 acres; 50 feet deep; occupies open glacial pocket at head of canyon; at timberline; rockbound shoreline; low productivity, and poor spawning. Reserved for golden trout. Receives occasional air plant of fingerlings.

Bluejay Lake No. 1. Elev. 10,200; .75 acre; 20 feet deep; high montane, glacial, well timbered with rock and meadow fringed shoreline; fair food and spawning. Contains a small self-sustaining population of rainbow trout. No need to plant.

Bluejay Lake No. 2. Elev. 10,260; 4 acres; 37 feet deep; high montane; glacial and granitoid; near timberline with rocky abrupt shoreline; fair food but poor spawning. Contains rainbow trout maintained by occasional air plant of fingerlings.



Bluejay Lake No. 2

Bluejay Lake Nos. 3 and 4. Elev. 10,900; about 3 acres each; high montane, glacial, and granitoid; above timberline. Barren and will not be planted due to inaccessibility.

First Recess Creek. Elev. 8,360-11,260; 2 miles long; very steep and cold, cascades over numerous high falls and granite slicks; poor food and few pools; intermittent in upper section. Unsuitable for fish; will not be planted.

Fourth Recess Lake. Elev. 10,150; 30 acres; 60 feet deep; granitoid; lies in long trough between high rocky and wooded ridges; semi-rocky shoreline; good food and fair spawning. Rainbow and eastern brook trout present up to 14 inches. Requires occasional air plant of rainbow fingerlings to sustain because of heavy angling use. Kamloops introduced on experimental basis.

Golden Creek. Elev. 10,000-11,860; 2.25 miles long. Above Golden Lake a steep, rocky, cascading stream; goes intermittent in summer and unsuitable for fish. Below Golden Lake the stream is small with more gradual gradient; fair food and limited spawning; frequent small pools. Golden trout present but not numerous; rainbow appear in lower one-half mile. No planting required.

Golden Lake. Elev. 11,000; 19 acres; over 85 feet deep; high montane, glacial, granitoid; above timberline with abrupt rocky shoreline; low productivity and poor spawning. Golden trout present. Reserved for golden and receives occasional air plant of fingerlings to sustain.

Grinnell Lake. Elev. 10,820; 65 acres; possibly 75 feet deep; high montane, bare granitoid and glacial terrain at timberline; abrupt rockbound shoreline; low productivity but fair spawning for eastern brook. Eastern brook usually in fair condition and fairly numerous, self-sustaining.

Grinnell Lake, Little. Elev. 11,080; 2 acres; high montane; lies in bare granite horseshoe above timberline; entirely rockbound; poor food and no spawning. Planted occasionally with eastern brook trout.

Hopkins Creek. Elev. 9,210-11,050; 3 miles long; small cascading stream heading in Upper Hopkins Lake; gradual gradient in middle section through meadow areas then steep drop down wooded slope to Mono Creek. Contains a plentiful self-sustaining golden and eastern brook trout population. No planting needed.

Hopkins Lake, Lower. Elev. 10,360; 10 acres; 17 feet deep; high montane; in timbered glacial pocket; meadow lined margin; good food and fair spawning. Plentiful eastern brook fishery with occasional rainbows entering the catch. Receives occasional small air plant of rainbow fingerlings.

Hopkins Lake, Upper. Elev. 11,050; 10 acres; possibly 50 feet deep; alpine, glacial bowl above timberline; entirely rockbound; usually ice bound until mid-July; low productivity and no spawning. Reserved for golden trout. Receives occasional air plant of fingerlings. Golden trout fairly abundant to 10 inches.

Laurel Creek. Elev. 8,760-10,820; 2.5 miles long; small, cascading stream originating in Grinnell Lake; fair food and spawning in meadow areas; lower section cascades to Mono Creek. Predominantly eastern brook but an occasional rainbow taken. Self-sustaining with abundant natural propagation and "drift" downstream from the lake.



Grinnell Lake



Lower Mills Creek Lake

Laurel Lake. Elev. 10,270; 2.5 acres; possibly 20 feet deep; alpine, granitic, and glacial; near timberline with fair food and spawning. Has a small self-sustaining eastern brook fishery and no need to plant.

Mills Creek. Elev. 9,080-11,160; 2.5 miles long; heads in Upper Mills Creek Lake and descends through meadow areas and granite slicks to Second Recess Creek. Lower mile has good pools, shelter and food. Rainbow abundant and self-sustaining in this section; no planting needed. Above here numerous falls and slicks bar migration upstream. The upper section flows through several lakes and ponds with fair populations of golden trout.

Mills Creek Lake, Lower. Elev. 10,825; 10 acres; 30 feet deep; alpine; granitoid and glacial; at timberline; rocky margin with some meadow fringe; fair food and good spawning areas. Self-sustaining with golden trout.

Mills Creek Lake, Upper. Elev. 11,160; 15 acres; possibly 50 feet deep; alpine and glacial; lies in bare granite bowl at head of canyon above timberline; rocky shoreline with meadow fringe; fair food and fair spawning areas. Reserved for golden trout and occasional air plant needed to sustain the fishery.

Mist Lake. Elev. 10,920; 2.5 acres; 10 feet deep; alpine; glacial; on granitoid bench above timberline; rockbound margin; low productivity and no spawning areas. Barren and too shallow and poor to stock.

Mono Creek. Elev. 7,900-10,000 (North Fork to Fourth Recess); 8 miles long; cascades down deep wooded canyon with high ridges rising on either side; 20 to 40 feet wide; many flat meanders with cascades between excellent pools, riffles, and spawning areas; pools become larger and deeper in lower section. Contains an excellent mixed population of rainbow, brown, eastern brook and golden trout. Rainbow and rainbow-golden hybrids predominate and an occasional brown trout may be taken in the vicinity of the North Fork. Fishery is entirely self-sustaining.

Mono Creek, North Fork. Elev. 7,900-10,800; 5 miles long; cascades over granite slicks and falls through lodge-pole timber to Mono Creek; good pools and riffles; excellent spawning areas. Contains a mixed self-sustaining fishery of rainbow, golden and rainbow-golden hybrids. No need to plant.



Lake No. 1, Pioneer Basin

Mott Lake. Elev. 10,025; 18 acres; 30 feet deep; alpine; glaciated granite; near timberline; sparsely timbered shoreline with turfy fringe; good food and spawning. Contains self-sustaining population of rainbow trout.

Needle Lake. Elev. 11,340; 2 acres; 30 feet deep; alpine, glacial cirque surrounded on three sides by high precipitous ridges. Rockbound lake with fair food but no spawning. Eastern brook present to 12 inches. Requires regular small air plant of fingerlings to sustain.

Pioneer Creek. Elev. 9,800-11,160; 3 miles long; small cascading stream with many meadow stretches; good pools and riffles, good food and excellent spawning. Eastern brook predominate but rainbow and golden-rainbow hybrids also present. Self-sustaining and no planting needed.

Pioneer Lake No. 1 (also called Mud Lake). Elev. 10,360; 5 acres; 21 feet deep; alpine; timbered; surrounded by large meadow; good food and spawning. Plentiful eastern brook to 10 inches. Rainbow-Golden hybrids scarce. Self-sustaining and no planting needed.

Pioneer Lake No. 2. Elev. 10,820; 10 acres; 25 feet deep; alpine; glaciated granite; rocky margin; near timberline; good food and spawning. Plentiful self-sustaining eastern brook fishery present with nice fish to 10 inches. No need to plant.



Lake No. 2A, Pioneer Basin

Pioneer Lake No. 2A. Elev. 10,850; 4.5 acres; 45 feet deep; alpine; rough granite basin near timberline; mostly rocky shoreline; fair food but poor spawning. Rainbow and eastern brook present but not numerous. Requires occasional small air plant of eastern brook to sustain.

Pioneer Lake No. 3. Elev. 10,860; 48.5 acres; 52 feet deep; occupies shallow, open, granitoid basin at timberline; boulder-turf fringed, irregular margin; fair food and fair spawning. Contains good population of eastern brook. Rainbow, golden and rainbow-golden hybrids. Self-sustaining fishery and no need to plant.

Pioneer Lake No. 4. Elev. 10,900; 7 acres; 40 feet deep; alpine; glacial and granitoid; scattered dwarfed conifers; rocky and turf fringed; fair food and good spawning. Self-sustaining eastern brook fishery present with fish up to 12 inches. No planting needed.

Pioneer Lake No. 4A. Elev. 11,400; 1 acre; 15 feet deep; alpine, glacial tarn above timberline; poor food and poor spawning areas. Barren. Too small, cold and poor to stock.

Pioneer Lake No. 4B. Elev. 11,450; .25 acre; 15 feet deep; alpine, granitoid, glacial basin above timberline; poor food and no spawning areas. Barren. Unsuitable for fish; will not be planted.

Pioneer Lake No. 4C. Elev. 11,700; .50 acre; 15 feet deep; alpine; in glacial cirque above timberline; rockbound shoreline; poor food and no spawning areas. Barren. Too small and cold to plant.

Pioneer Lake No. 5. Elev. 11,050; 15 acres; 40 feet deep; occupies open, shallow, granitoid basin near timberline; a few stunted conifers present; lake margin fringed with turfy meadow; fair food but poor spawning. Eastern brook abundant to 14 inches and golden trout to 9 inches present. Requires occasional air plant of fingerlings to sustain.

Pioneer Lake No. 6. Elev. 11,160; 7.5 acres; 30 feet deep; alpine; granitoid, glacial basin above timberline; poor food and spawning areas. Reserved for golden trout which are present to 10 inches. Requires occasional air plant to sustain.

Recess Lake, Lower. Elev. 11,000; 2 acres; possibly 25 feet deep; alpine; granitoid, glacial tarn; above timberline; rockbound shoreline; low productivity and limited spawning. Barren, but may be planted experimentally with cutthroat trout.



Lake No. 3, Pioneer Basin

Recess Lake, Upper. Elev. 11,260; 2.5 acres; possibly 30 feet deep; lies in glacial cirque above timberline; completely rockbound; low productivity and no spawning. Ice bound until mid-summer. Barren and will not be planted due to small size and inaccessibility.

Rosy Finch Lake. Elev. 10,800; 18 acres; possibly 50 feet deep; alpine, glaciated bowl at head of basin; above timberline; fair food but poor spawning. Contains rainbow trout in limited numbers. Requires occasional air plant of fingerlings to sustain.

Second Recess Creek. Elev. 8,520-11,060; 4 miles long; a rapid, cascading stream near its mouth but with gentle gradient above through large meadow areas; excellent pools and riffles; good productivity and excellent spawning. Steep and intermittent in upper section. Rainbow fishing very good to a point one mile above Mills Creek junction. Entirely self-sustaining and no need to plant.

Silver Pass Lake. Elev. 10,340; 26.5 acres; 75 feet deep; alpine, granite basin with high cliffs on 3 sides; at timberline; meadow and rocky shoreline; fair food and spawning. Reserved for golden trout because of their presence in stream below. Occasional plant of fingerlings required to sustain fishery.

Snow Lake, Lower. Elev. 11,310; 13 acres; possibly 40 feet deep; alpine; glacial and granitoid; above timberline; lies near head of narrow steep canyon; fair food and fair spawning. Golden trout present to 12 inches. Requires supplementary plant of fingerlings to sustain.

Snow Lake, Upper. Elev. 11,880; 6 acres; 25 feet deep; alpine; granitoid, glacial pocket above timberline; lies at head of Fourth Recess Canyon; fair food; poor spawning. Contains small golden trout maintained by occasional air plants of fingerlings.

Summit Lake. Elev. 11,880; 6 acres; 25 feet deep; alpine; glacial; lies on top of Mono Pass in a rocky depression; above timberline; rocky-sandy margin devoid of vegetation; fair food but no spawning. Rainbow present. Will be reserved for golden trout and will receive occasional air plant to sustain.

Third Recess Lake. Elev. 10,470; 18 acres; 50 feet deep; alpine, glacial cirque near timberline; rocky-turf lined margin; good food and fair spawning. Contains a self-sustaining population of golden, rainbow and golden-rainbow hybrids. No need to plant. Rainbow-golden hybrids present to 10 inches.

Tough Lake (also called Frog Lake). Elev. 10,420; 5 acres; 30 feet deep; alpine; granitoid cirque on bench high above Mono Creek at timberline; rockbound; fair food but negligible spawning areas. Initial plant of golden trout made in 1959 on trial basis.

Trail Lake. Elev. 11,200; 7 acres; possibly 40 feet deep; alpine; lies in rocky granite cup with scattered dwarf conifers; turfy margin; fair food and limited spawning. Eastern brook present up to 11 inches; self-sustaining.

Unnamed Lakelet below Upper Hopkins Lake. Elev. 10,860; 1 acre; 7 feet deep; alpine, rocky pocket above timberline; bolder-turf lined margin; fair food and fair spawning. Eastern brook present. Self-sustaining and no need to plant. Will be restored to golden trout when conditions permit.

Vermillion Lake. Elev. 10,500; 2 acres; 7 feet deep. This shallow lake lies on a bench above the Vermillion Cliffs surrounded by open sandy areas and sparse vegetation. Subject to kills during severe winters. Eastern brook present and fishery maintained by occasional air plant of fingerlings.

LEAVE A CLEAN CAMP AND A DEAD FIRE

When you go camping . . .

- Bring out with you everything you took in.
- If fires are allowed, burn all papers, cardboard, boxes and all 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 camp than they were when you arrived. 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

