Fly Fishing Bucket List Destination: Guild Ranch Reservoir

Part 3 in a 4 part series

Located 30 miles southwest of Evanston, Wyoming, lies a world-class stillwater fishery. It's known by many names including, “Guild Ranch Reservoir,” "Hawg Heaven,” “Guild and Dean Reservoir,” and “Piedmont Reservoir,” but locals know it as “Trout King Lake.” If you love big trout, this lake is certainly worth putting on your bucket list.

Guild Ranch Reservoir is truly a remarkable fishery. I always include this reservoir during my travels in the spring and fall. It can easily be fished from a pontoon boat or boat with an electric motor. This catch and release lake allows only artificial flies with barbless hooks.



Only fifteen anglers are allowed on the lake at one time. The Guild family owns the lake and rents a little cabin situated right next to the water. The cabin sleeps five, has electricity, a wood burning stove, three beds, a fire pit, and a two burner Camp Chef stove for cooking. Bring your own drinking water. You can camp, stay at the cabin, or stay in Evanston, a short 30-minute drive into town.

The fishing here lures anglers from all over the country. It is not the number of fish that are caught that makes this lake so compelling, it is the size and the variety of species that are available: Rainbows, Cutthroats, Brooks, Browns, and Tigers. Trout up to 34 inches in length have been caught here.



Tiger trout landed mid-May on my UV Midge pattern



Vickie’s UV Midge

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How to fish this lake:

The dam, upper bay, and the island area are all productive areas to target. I find that this lake fishes the best during the springtime as the higher water levels allow access to the upper part of the lake.

A nutrient rich reservoir, Guild Ranch Reservoir supports a wide variety of aquatic insects. For example, when the damsels emerge in June, trout will position themselves close to shallow shoreline areas, particularly in the upper bay. Here they wait, gorging on the damsel pupa as they swim towards the shore to begin their emergence into adults. This is the perfect time to position yourself to cast to the shoreline to increase your odds of hooking up.



Recently emerged damsel fly extending its wings to dry



During the spring and early summer, flying ants make their appearance. Be sure to include some flying ant patterns in various sizes to your fly box, because when the ants are on the water, I find trout will key in on them and ignore all other fly offerings.

The one fly pattern that I cannot do without at Guild Ranch Reservoir is my black UV Emerger pattern. This pattern has proven to be deadly especially when there are callibaetis on the water.



Vickie's UV Emerger



Callibaetis Mayfly

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Trout landed with Vickie's UV Emerger pattern

In the spring, minnows can be observed swimming in shallow shoreline areas, as seen in this photo taken in June. Minnow or streamer patterns are effective, particularly early morning along shallow shoreline areas. Once trout reach approximately 16 inches in length, their need for protein increases. Prey fish and minnows then become desired food sources.



Fish minnow patterns close to shallow shoreline areas or in the top few feet as seen in this video that was taken in May: https://youtu.be/TzVyEkwfkDY

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Trout caught on Vickie's UV Predator Minnow



Vickie's UV Predator Minnow

If you have never fished this lake before, I suggest you hire a guide. It provides you a shortcut to learning how to fish this lake. The time that you spend learning how and where to fish this lake will be well worth it once you hook into a fish of a lifetime.

When fishing Guild Ranch Reservoir, you may want to include Monster Lake to your plans as it is an easy 5½ hours' drive away. That way, you fish two lakes which both offer exceptional trophy trout.

Watch for my next article on Monster Lake

If you have any questions, please contact me through my email by clicking:
http://stillwateradventure.com/contact

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