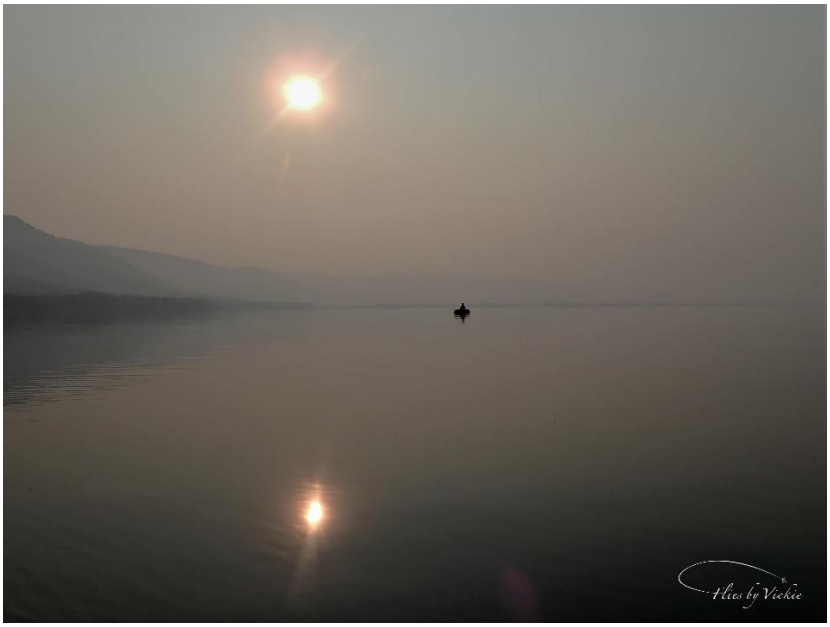
Vickie's 2020 Fall Fishing Trip, Part 1



Smoky fishing conditions at Henry's Lake, Idaho

Last month I headed toward Henry's Lake, Idaho to escape the noise of the city and the dangerous air quality from smoke blanketing most of Oregon due to many large forest fires. As I traveled west, I looked forward to enjoying the beauty and quiet solitude of lakes I sought and reminded why I like to follow the roads less traveled. The water is my muse – that and a strong cup of coffee – and watching the morning sunrise fills me with pure bliss.

Henry's Lake, Idaho

Unfortunately, Henry's Lake was also shrouded with smoke and suffering poor air quality due to a fire 15 miles up the canyon. In the evening, firefighting planes skimmed the lake, filling up with water, and flew off toward the canyon to help battle the fire.

Fishing was tough due to high water temperatures caused by unusually warm weather. Although trout were reluctant, Mark Swaim and Rob Matasic successfully landed fish. They allowed the fly to drop and used a slow retrieve to entice trout to bite.



Mark Swaim & Rob Matasic caught these trout on my Burnt Orange Grizzly Bug

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Fish were not coming to the shorelines. The only fishing was early in the morning and late in the day, and even then it was still tough. The advice from local anglers was to wait for lower temperatures in October before fishing would improve. I therefore packed up and headed on to Crittenden Reservoir in Nevada.

Crittenden Reservoir, Nevada



Crittenden Reservoir, Nevada

Crittenden Reservoir was down 7 feet due to water drawdowns over the summer. Normally submerged willows were now 4-5 feet above the surface at the south end of the lake. I found fishing better at the south end where water temperatures were cooler, averaging 58-60 degrees, F.

Warmer water temperatures require slow retrieves. The most productive times of the day were during low light conditions early and late in the day when trout were more likely to hunt close to the surface. Streamer patterns like my Predator Leech and Predator Bugger were effective.



Caught on my Predator Leech

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Mid-morning around 10 am, three clues indicated trout were targeting aquatic insects in the pupa stage. First, I spotted trout porpoising, their dorsal fins broking the water as they inhaled pupae close to the surface. Second, I began getting hit on the back end of my retrieve. Third, as I lifted my rod to recast, I also got strikes. These three factors signaled that trout were keying on the pupa stage of aquatic insects.

I therefore removed my streamer pattern and tied my gray UV Emerger using my Cortland Clear Camo Intermediate line.



Caught on my white UV Emerger

Using my stop-and-drop technique was successful. Here is how to do it:

1. Stop moving and cast
2. Allow the fly to drop for 10, 20, or 30 seconds, then remove slack in the line
3. Retrieve using a slow, 4 to 6-inch pull
4. Pause for a minimum of 5 seconds before beginning the next retrieve
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4
6. If not hit, cast to another location

The pause in step 4 allows the fly to drop, and trout will take the fly during that pause 99% of the time. Try varying the initial count. I start at 10 seconds. If I do not get hit, I increase the count to 20, and then 30 seconds. The Cortland Clear Camo Intermediate line sinks approximately a foot every 10 seconds. Thus, if I count 30 seconds before my first retrieve, the fly will have dropped approximately 3 feet below the surface. When retrieved, the line will move the fly at an upward angle mirroring the upwards angle of pupae ascending to the surface.

If you don't get hit, recast to a different location. Avoid casting in the same place over again. I shared this technique with a fellow angler, and he immediately landed four trout.

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Trout caught by Stan Miller at Crittenden Reservoir using my Black and Burgundy Predator Leech

No trip is without unexpected adventure. A sudden windstorm interrupted my reverie with 30 mph winds blowing me back to the shoreline. The winds whipped up two-foot waves which crashed into the shore, blending up a rich, smelly, dark mixture of mud and cow pies.

As I struggled to shore to escape the wind and waves, I was showered with this foul concoction. Oh, what I would have given for a nice, hot, *clean* shower! That evening, 30 mph winds and rain blew through, rocking my truck from side to side. The following morning, I contemplated replacing my morning coffee with tequila and hoisting my cup out respect to the elements and to myself for surviving them.

Fishing at Crittenden was excellent. Several evenings, many of us went out again after dinner and netted ourselves a few more fish before stars filled the nighttime sky. After five days, the desire for a nice, hot shower beat out my need to catch more fish. I headed back to southern Oregon and fished Hyde Lake with several clients.

Hyde Lake, Oregon

Returning to Oregon, I got my wish for cooler weather starting out the morning at a brisk 36 degrees, F. However, this was short lived as gusting winds and passing weather systems quickly raised temperatures to the 80s. Struggling against weeds just below the surface and contending with changing barometric pressures and passing weather systems made fishing a challenge.

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Early morning frost

The challenges were not limited to on the water. Two vehicles got stranded, sucked in the mud while attempting to launch boats. One vehicle got stuck. The second vehicle pulled the first out, only to get stuck itself. I was able to pull that second vehicle out with my truck.

Remember how I said that I was looking for the quiet solitude in the fall trip? Fate had other plans!

Marilyn and Makenna won my respect for not only surviving the tricky launch, but also for patiently fishing all day despite catching no trout. The passing weather systems caused the trout to have lock jaw. Short of putting a knife between my teeth and diving under the water to get the fish, no amount of coaxing could successfully entice these normally hard-hitting trout.



The next day yielded somewhat better conditions. The weather calmed down, and Mark Doolittle was successful landing fish using my UV Midge Pupa.

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Mark Doolittle caught this trout with my UV Midge Pupa

The flies I used so far on my fall fishing trip are:

- Black, burnt orange, and burgundy Grizzly Bug
- Black Predator Bugger
- Black Predator Leech with Burgundy Tail
- Burgundy Predator Leech with Black Tail
- Gray UV Emerger
- White UV Midge Pupa

I will be heading back out to Crittenden and then to Southern Oregon this week. I continue to look forward to each sunrise - never forgetting the coffee!

Stay tuned for Part 2 of my fall fishing trip saga!

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