Vickie's 2020 Fall fishing Trip, Part 2

Crittenden Reservoir, Montello Nevada

Anglers often ask me why the bite suddenly stops. Does it mean the fish are no longer feeding? My fishing trip to Crittenden was a perfect example of this happening and what to do should it happen to you.

I headed to Montello, Nevada to fish Crittenden Reservoir since many of the lakes I planned to fish in Oregon were closed due to wildfires or high-water temperatures due to the unseasonably warm weather.

At Crittenden, October water temperatures continued to cool to 58 degrees, F. Anticipating an early morning bite, I headed out just as light was beginning to illuminate the sky ushering in the beginning of a new day. Safe from predators in the low light, large trout and bass cruised close to shoreline edges to feed. This was the perfect time to use a streamer or minnow pattern (like my Predator Leech, Predator Minnow, and Predator Bugger).

Using a 1X tippet, I gripped my rod tightly in anticipation of hard strikes. I was not disappointed. They hit like freight trains and inhaled my Predator Minnow! The bite continued until the sun hit the water. Losing the security under the cover of darkness brought the bite to an abrupt halt. The changing conditions caused the trout to adjust their feeding behavior because they no longer felt safe from overhead predators in the clear shallow water. Trout moved from the shallow edges to 4-5 foot depths close to weed lines. Here they could continue to feed and quickly seek shelter in the weeds if threatened.



Largemouth bass caught on my Yellow Predator Minnow

Moving parallel along the shoreline in my pontoon boat, I followed the weed line and watched for signs of feeding trout. Maintaining my boat in 4-7 foot depths, I was able to sight cast to my left and right towards rising trout on either side of my boat. When I observed either a dorsal rise or a trout sipping emerging calliabaetis on the surface, I sight cast, aiming the cast so my fly landed a few feet in front of the moving trout. This was a fun challenge testing the accuracy my casting skills. Landing trout when sight casting provided me unbridled joy. After an hour, the hatch stopped and there were no longer signs of feeding trout.

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Moving farther from the shoreline, I positioned my boat in 7-10 foot depths and cast close to partially submerged willows. This underwater structure serves as a haven for trout. In prior years I have donated many of my flies to these underwater snares which are normally hidden under water. Trout continued to feed in the top few feet even though they were holding in 7-10 feet of water. Trout aggressively hit my Black Grizzly Bug, and their aggressive bite continued until noon.



Low water levels at Crittenden exposed normally hidden willows



Caught on my Black Grizzly Bug

This was a perfect example demonstrating when the bite suddenly changes, it does not mean that the trout have stopped feeding. Instead, the trout's feeding behavior has shifted in response to a change in conditions. Trout may either be feeding at a different depth or may have moved to a different location. In this example, at first light trout were feeding next to shoreline edges just below the surface. Mid-morning around 9 a.m., fish moved to 4-7 feet of water to feed on pupae or adults on the surface. Late morning when the sun was overhead, trout positioned themselves in 7-10 feet of water within the proximity of the underwater willows while they continued to feed in the top three feet.

When the bite changes, we assume that fish saw our fly and refused it. The first thing that anglers will do is to change the fly. However, most likely there may no longer be any trout in the area they are fishing. Either trout have moved to a different location or started feeding at a different depth.

Before changing the pattern, move to a different location. If you are still not getting hit, adjust the depth you are presenting the fly before changing the pattern.

Fishing continued to be exceptionally good. But as afternoon temperatures soared above 84 degrees with no breeze, and massive swarms of flies blanketed my truck and me, I decided it was time to escape and headed west to Pronghorn Lake in Southeast Oregon.

Click here to read Part 1 of my 2020 fall fishing trip. Stay tuned for Part 3 of my 2020 fall fishing trip.

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