

## Fall Fishing: The “Best Bet” Waters

By Chris Vasey & Joe Doucette

Fall fishing has always been the sure bet for the seasoned angler. Summer’s heat is gone and the fish are on the bite!

Fall always provides perfect temperatures: the air is just right, and the water temperatures are perfect. Less traffic on the water and hungry fish building their reserves for winter mean more productive fishing for the angler.

Some species of trout are spawning. Their search for food pre and post-spawn equates to high catch rates for the elusive brown trout.

Because of how fish use the water, fall fishing offers advantages. In reservoirs, summer’s heat keeps trout deep in the water column where they’re hard to reach. Fall’s cooler air temperatures chill the water and bring the fish to the surface. In streams and rivers, summer’s high flows have subsided; now the fish are more concentrated in holding areas.

So whether you’re a beginner or seasoned angler, your best bet to catch is fall. Here are some “best bet” waters and suggestions on how to catch. For specific water-by-water information and directions, check out NDOW’s Angler Information Guides on the web at [www.ndow.org](http://www.ndow.org).

### FALL FISHING IN WESTERN NEVADA

#### SPARKS MARINA

The Sparks Marina is under-fished in fall...so it’s a great time to hit this water. It’s better fished from a canoe or float tube due to the structure of the lake. Although the majority of trout are planter-sized, some 18 to 20 inch fish have been pulled from this water.

If you’re targeting trout, once on the water, troll deep with a Repala® Castmaster or your favorite spinner. Fly anglers should try beaded crystal woolly buggers in brown, root beer or black. Shore anglers using Power Bait® and eggs have had the best results. Use a Type 3 or 4 line.

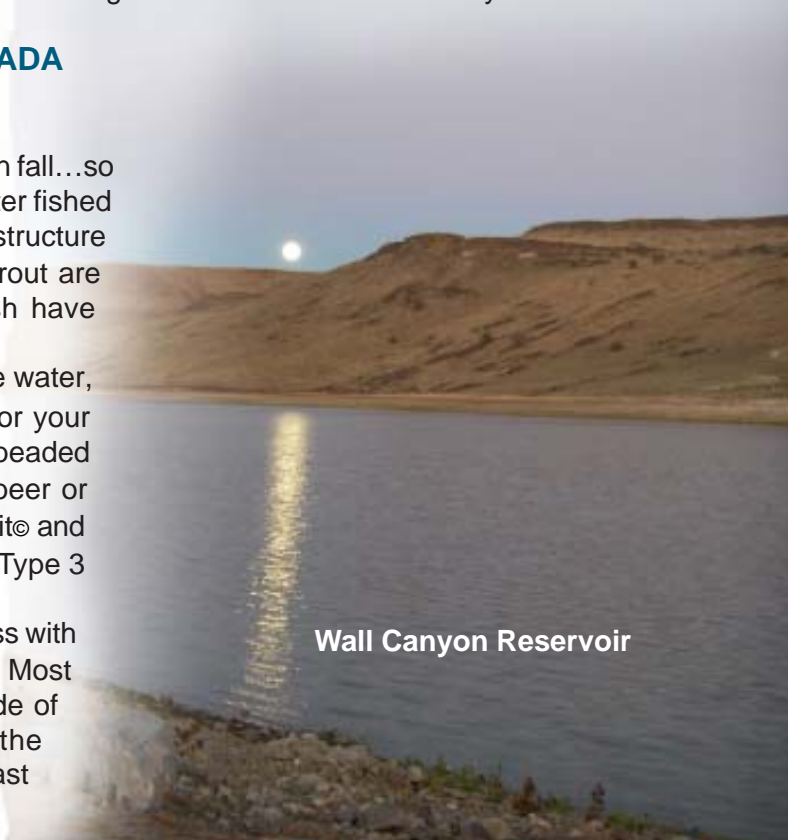
Some anglers target the spotted bass with deep jigs, bass plugs and spinner baits. Most spotted bass are found on the east side of the lake. An under-utilized fish in the Sparks Marina is channel catfish. The last record set in this water for catfish was

over 12 pounds, with most in the 14 to 16 inch range.

#### WALL CANYON RESERVOIR

If you’re looking for a little adventure and you are up for some desert travel, Wall Canyon Reservoir could be your next fall fishing experience. Upon arrival there is no cover from the elements, and the water conditions are moderately low, so come prepared. The fishing can be good with some carry over trout and some opportunity for small mouth. In addition to the reservoir, the stream has some great brown trout fishing. The past has produced some very large fish in this fishery but does change from year to year. The fly anglers and spin fishermen keep to dark colors due to the clarity of the water. There are no services, or facilities, so make sure your tackle box is well stocked.

To get there from Reno, travel 30 miles east on Interstate 80. Turn North onto Highway 447 at Wadsworth. Travel 135 miles through Gerlach, turn right onto a dirt road marked by a windmill just north of Duck Flat. Continue 8 miles along this dirt road to Wall Canyon Reservoir.



Wall Canyon Reservoir

### KNOTT CREEK RESERVOIR

Knott Creek is one of those special places. This place is what you picture in your mind when you think of fishing in Nevada. It has a picturesque view of rock formations and a mountain backdrop. Many anglers think of Knott Creek when the quaking aspens turn. This is a great time to fish this reservoir and recently has been a very productive fishery with fish often reaching averages of 18 inches plus. The current water record is seven pounds caught in 2004 but many people have reported catching equal sizes recently. This is a special regulation water with a limit of one fish over 18 inches and only artificial lures with single barbless hooks. Fly anglers are successful with leach patterns in blood red to maroon color, damsel patterns, blood midges, and simulators. Woolly buggers work in black and olive. Recommended line is intermediate to type three. Species of trout include rainbow trout and bowcutts, but there is also a bonus hybrid species of tiger trout which have a very aggressive strike. It does take some fuel and determination to get to Knott Creek.

Travel north out of Winnemucca 33 miles on US 95, turning left onto SR 140 and on to Denio Junction (100 miles from Winnemucca) before turning left and traveling 9 miles before turning south in to the Knott Creek Road. Follow the road for seven miles to the junction and Sand Pass Road, then another seven miles into Knott Creek Reservoir. Be prepared for rough and slippery roads. Vehicles with 4x4 are advised, high clearance is recommended. Towed trailers, cabover campers and tent trailers are not recommended.



Knott Creek

### TRUCKEE RIVER

If you are familiar with the Truckee River you know of the summer inner tube hatch and rafter hatch. Which translates to loads of people floating down the river. Fall means this is over and you will have the river back to yourself. Fall offers the best time of year to fish the Truckee. Fall fishing on the Truckee has great opportunity for brown, rainbow, cutthroat, and white fish. The Truckee is stocked regularly with triploid rainbow, which is a sterile trout and Lahontan cutthroat trout, which are native to this water. The great thing about the Truckee is its location. If you live near or in Reno there no reason to burn gas to get to a California water, great trophy-size fish are right here in town. Last year alone, we had five trophy entries of brown trout in the eight-pound range and many reaching five pounds plus. This time of year is great for targeting brown trout but keep in mind it is spawning time so if you see grouping of fish or freshly scoured gravel, it's probably a redd, which is where a female deposited her eggs. Leave these areas alone and avoid wading through them. If you are flyfishing, the best tactics for Truckee fall fishing are big streamers and crayfish patterns. Other tactics include heavy stones trailed by a gold ribbed hare's ear or copper John and Kyle stone, October caddis pupa and emergers. Spin fishermen use large spinners, Rapala's® broken back black and gold, and black silver J-11 or drift bait through deep holes, and undercuts of structure.

### EAST WALKER RIVER

The East Walker, like the Truckee, has some great brown trout fishing as well as great rainbow trout fishing. If not familiar with this water, fishing the East Walker in the Special Regulation water can be both rewarding and frustrating. The fish here have been well educated so be prepared to change your tactics often. The flows on this river drop after the irrigation season ends and it becomes easier to fish. If you try to fish this water during irrigation season, wading is next to impossible. Good flows on the river are from 115 cfs to 65 cfs. Make sure to check out the USGS web link for flows on East Walker as well as others. There is a great number of brown trout in the East Walker but few have the ability to target

them. If you're into just catching some nice 12 to 14 inch rainbow, try using San Juan worms and prince nymphs but this tactic usually does not work for targeting the elusive brown trout. To target the brown trout expect to catch less but what you do catch will be larger. Use large streamers, but be aware this tactic can be hard to fish due to algae in the water.

There is a special regulation water on this section which includes portions of the river from Sweetwater Creek downstream to ½ mile below the confluence of East Walker River and Red Wash Creek which is catch and release fishing only. Only artificial lures with single barbless hooks may be used. Getting there: from Wellington on Hwy 208, travel south on the Wellington Cutoff to Hwy 338. Continue south on Hwy 338 for about 23.5 miles, turning east on Sweetwater Road. This is a County maintained dirt road and about the first three miles is Rosaschi Ranch. Many anglers park near the County Bridge within 1.5 miles of Highway 338 turnoff. From this bridge, continue east about four miles to reach the Elbow, directly adjacent to the road. Below this section is no longer catch and release. Be prepared, there are



Illipah Reservoir

no facilities or services after leaving Wellington.

### FALL FISHING IN EASTERN NEVADA

Fall fishing in eastern Nevada is some of the best fishing of the year, with both brown trout and brook trout heading into the spawn with absolutely brilliant colors that match the autumn leaves. Other fish are getting ready for winter by putting on the feedbag in preparation for ice-covered waters as evidenced by the official state record smallmouth bass being taken out of South Fork Reservoir in November of 2001. At our area reservoirs the secret is to think big and go slow. While many bait anglers swear by PowerBait®, worms do appear to be more effective and they should be floated off of the bottom either with something like a marshmallow or by inflating them. Presentation of lures, spinners and flies should be slowed down just a bit, especially if targeting warm water species. Here are some of the waters that NDOW biologists are recommending in eastern Nevada this fall.

#### CAVE LAKE

This White Pine County reservoir is very popular with Las Vegas and Ely anglers and regularly produces limits of 9 to 12-inch brookies and rainbows throughout the year. However, it gets especially good in the fall as the large browns that inhabit the depths of this lake move into the creek above the reservoir to spawn. Target this end of the lake with rapalas, spinners and streamer flies if you want to pursue these browns. Fishing right at dawn or dusk and into the darker hours of the evening can be very productive. But hold onto your rod because the state record brown of 27 lbs 5 oz. came out of this lake as well as a 14 pounder that was surveyed by NDOW biologist Chris Crookshanks just a couple of years ago.

#### ILLIPAH RESERVOIR

This lake also carries some nice browns and anglers should chase them here just like they would at Cave Lake. But don't forget to head up into the creek above the lake hitting the small holes and pools for browns. Unlike Cave Lake, the rainbows here get much larger than 12 inches, often pushing 17 to 18 inches. This irrigation reservoir has a relatively small pool of water in the fall, allowing anglers to target these fish much easier. Use worms, rapalas or woolly buggers to catch both the rainbows and the browns.

### WHITE PINE COUNTY STREAMS

Creeks in White Pine County to fish include Cleve, Steptoe, Cave and White River. Dead drifting grasshoppers or worms through the pools and runs is often very effective. Small spinners where there is enough flow can be used. As for flies, start with terrestrials and then switch to nymphs such as zug bugs, PT's, Prince and hare's ears. Where there is enough water, nymph droppers below a hopper or a beetle is a good way to keep the nymph off of the bottom.

### SOUTH FORK RESERVOIR

Many anglers save fall for their fishing trips to South Fork Reservoir as the fishing can be excellent here from about the end of September into the middle or end of November. Recently anglers have been producing limits of 16 to 20-inch fish with the occasional 23 or 24-inch fish being taken. Nightcrawlers floated off of the bottom are the ticket for shore anglers, while rapala type lures or flashers tipped with a worm produce for trollers. Flyrodders should use woolly buggie or leach patterns fished on an intermediate sink line from a float tube or canoe. Blood or brown appear to be the best colors in the fall, followed by olive, purple and black. Don't forget to add streamer type patterns such as muddler minnows or clousers to your fly box when heading here. Black bass are on structure and crankbaits as well as swim baits should be effective. Many of the bass fishermen in the local area like to use darker patterns and colors.

### WILDHORSE RESERVOIR

This water has been underfished this year due to the fish die-off in August of 2007 and the price of fuel. However, there are still quality fish to be taken here as anglers regularly catch trout up to 20-inches. Like South Fork, rapala type lures and flashers tipped with worms are working for trollers, while gold spoons and spinners as well as worms floated off of the bottom are working for shore fisherman. Flyrodders should use much the same arsenal as South Fork. The perch are doing well and many fish are in the 10 to 12 inch class. The secret is finding them. If you don't get perch within a half hour of fishing, move. Most fish can be caught with a small jig tipped with a worm or just a worm on a red hook. Jigs should be brightly colored with chartreuse or fluorescent orange being popular. Flyrodders can catch them with small flies like zug bugs, prince nymphs or small crystal buggers.

### WILSON RESERVOIR

This out of the way reservoir is another good body of water to hit, though fishing tends to slow down earlier than some of the others. The upside is that you can hunt chukar in the area and have a weekend of cast and blast. This water should be fished much the same way and with the same gear as at South Fork.

### ELKO COUNTY STREAMS

Many Elko County streams are very fishable this time of year. The falling of leaves is a catch 22. It makes it easier to get into the streams through the riparian brush, but sometimes there are mats of leaves covering very productive water. Most streams that hold fish will produce until the water temperatures dip too low, generally by the end of October or the beginning of November depending upon the location. Popular streams include Lamoille Creek, Tabor Creek, Owyhee River, Bruneau River and the Jarbidge River. If any terrestrials are present, start with these, otherwise any nymph made with peacock herl should be productive. Using a real hopper or worm without any weight through the runs or riffles is another good technique. In the larger runs or in the pools, small spinners can be effective.



South Fork Reservoir