

# Early anglers get the trout at Nevada's Pyramid Lake

Benjamin Spillman, RGJ 1:37 p.m. PDT October 17, 2014



(Photo: Benjamin Spillman/RGJ )

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If fishing was like Twitter a recent trip to Pyramid Lake would have been an unqualified success.

Unlike social media, however, when it comes to the pursuit of big trout getting lots of followers isn't much to celebrate.

But followers were what provided most of the action during fly fishing excursion that focused mostly on the east side of the lake, starting with the Hell's Kitchen area.

The reluctant Lahontan Cutthroat trout weren't willing to go into a feeding frenzy even when we fished in or near schools of baitfish that often lead to great fishing. For the most part they were satisfied to follow the flies back toward the boat, only to make a weak swipe for the lure before swimming off.



Frankie Lemus of Reno gets a hit while fly fishing on a recent morning at Pyramid Lake. The trout were active before sunrise and shortly after, then the fishing went cold. (Photo: Benjamin Spillman/RGJ )

Joe Kulikoski and Frankie Lemus, the two highly experienced anglers on the boat, still managed to haul in four trout before the action stopped for the day about 90 minutes after sunrise.

But even when fishing is slow fly fishing Pyramid Lake by boat, as opposed to the more popular shore fishing, is a unique Nevada experience worth trying.

The first thing to know about fishing Pyramid is it helps to start early so you can be on the water before sunrise, when the fish are most active. When we went that meant leaving Reno just before 5 a.m. and getting to the water before 6 a.m.

An early departure is especially important for people planning to fish by boat. There aren't many places to launch which means those who don't get to the boat ramp before the crowd could end up waiting in line during the best time of the day for fishing.



Joe Kulikowski of Reno fly fishing Pyramid Lake at sunrise on a recent morning. The trout were active before dawn and for about an hour after sunrise before the action dropped off. (Photo: Benjamin Spillman/RGJ)

After launching near Pelican Point it took about 20 minutes to get across the lake to Hell's Kitchen. It's an area along the east shore where steep cliffs plunge directly into deep water. The result is an area where anglers can fish for trout in deep water despite being close to shore.

While most of the anglers on the lake were using conventional tackle, our group was fly fishing with customized Pyramid Lake rigs from Reno Fly Shop, where Kulikowski is part owner.

Stillwater fishing on a big lake such as Pyramid requires a heftier fly setup than one would use to fish the Truckee River or smaller streams in the Sierra Nevada.

"We are casting pretty big flies and large shooting heads," said Jim Litchfield, another Reno Fly Shop owner who put together the rig I used.

The Pyramid rig I borrowed from Litchfield consisted of a 10-foot, seven-weight Echo lon rod with an Echo lon 7/9 reel. For flies I started with a size four Olive Gonga and switched to an Olive Circus Peanut 4x4. In the early morning dawn both seemed to do a good job attracting trout, even if I didn't manage to convert any of the hits into caught fish.

The weight and length of the rod combined with the sinking line helps fly anglers make the long casts needed for open water without getting foiled by the wind.

Kulikowski and Lemus cast the heavy line with ease, hitting their spots and landing a few fish early.

I found casting on the open water more challenging than in the Truckee River where anglers can usually get close to their spots and just flick a floating line into the stream. Anyone who is inexperienced with fly fishing would probably benefit from finding some open space on land to practice long casts before heading out to Pyramid.

Litchfield said fishing at Pyramid tends to be better during poor weather conditions, as opposed to the warm, calm day when we fished.

"The fishing typically gets good when it gets stormier," he said. "When it gets a little wavier and nastier and colder the fish feel more protected, they are less susceptible to predation from above."



This fly, a size four Olive Gonga, came in handy during a recent fishing trip on Pyramid Lake.  
(Photo: Benjamin Spillman/RGJ)

If you go:

Pyramid Lake fishing season is from Oct. 1 through June 30. It requires a license from the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

The lake is known for producing large, Lahontan Cutthroat trout which have seen a resurgence in recent years and can grow to 20 pounds or more.

For more information about fishing Pyramid Lake call Reno Fly Shop at (775) 323-3474