

Utah Wildlife News
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Catch a Fish, Win a Prize

400 tagged fish waiting to be caught

Vernal -- At least three fish marked with tags have been caught in the Uintah Basin. That means close to 400 marked fish are still available to anglers as part of a fishing event!

The Family Fun Fishing Event is sponsored by three radio stations in the Uintah Basin: the Fox, KNEU and B92.

Utah State Parks and Recreation and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources are also helping with the event.

"I've heard of at least three fish caught and maybe a fourth," says Teena Christopherson, the event coordinator. "The UDWR received three calls the day after Memorial Day [from anglers who caught a marked fish], and a tag has been turned in.

"This is a much better opener than last year," she says. "We just barely launched the event over the Memorial Day weekend. Last year, we went almost a month before the first tag was returned."

This is how the event works: roughly 400 fish marked with "winner" tags have been stocked into Steinaker and Sand Wash reservoirs. A few have also been stocked into Moose Pond, a small pond located south of Manila along the Flaming Gorge-Uintas National Scenic Byway (Route 44).

The first 50 anglers who catch a marked fish will receive a small prize. The names of every angler who catches a marked fish will be entered into a drawing for more than \$3,000 in prizes.

If you catch one of the marked fish, clip the tag and take it to Basin Sports, the Fox/KNEU radio station, the office at Steinaker State Park, the U.S. Forest Service office in Manila or the UDWR office in Vernal.

"There's no age limit, so anyone can join in on the fun." Christopherson says. "We [the radio stations and other sponsors] feel fishing is a great family activity.

"The Family Fun Fishing Event is a good way to bring a little extra excitement to your next outing."

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Contact Ron Stewart, DWR Northeastern Region Conservation Outreach Manager (435) 781-9453

See California Condors

Free viewing event on June 20

Virgin -- If you arrive at the right spot in southern Utah early enough, you might see some of the largest and rarest birds in the world soaring directly over your head.

On June 20, the Division of Wildlife Resources will host its annual California condor viewing event. Dubbed "The Day of the Condor," the free event runs from 8 a.m. to noon at an area 21½ miles north of Virgin in southwestern Utah.

Those who were at the event by 8 a.m. last year were treated to the sight of nearly 20 condors soaring in the sky above them.

You can see what others saw at last year's event by viewing a free video at www.youtube.com/user/UDWR. An audio interview about the event is available at www.wildlife.utah.gov/radio.

To reach the viewing site, take Route 9 to Virgin. Then turn off Route 9 at the Kolob Reservoir turnoff in Virgin, and travel north through Zion National Park. The viewing site is 21½ miles from Virgin near Kolob Reservoir.

After you've traveled 21½ miles, look for DWR officers directing cars into a parking area on the south side of the road.

Biologists from the DWR, the National Park Service and the Peregrine Fund will be available to answer your questions. Free information about condors will also be available.

Zion National Park will not charge an entrance fee on June 20. After seeing the condors, you might want to consider spending the rest of the day at the park.

A condor viewing hotspot

"Condor activity in Utah has increased dramatically over the past five years," says Keith Day, regional sensitive species biologist for the DWR. "It's not unusual to see 24 birds in Utah in the summer months, but 54 condors were here one day last August."

"That's very exciting when you consider how rare this bird is," Day says. "Of the 320 California condors in the world, just over half are free flying, and only half of those are found in Utah and Arizona.

"That means on any given day, you have the potential of seeing one-sixth of the world's wild population of California condors right here in southern Utah."

A large and unique bird

The California condor is the largest flying bird in the Northern Hemisphere. Its body is about 4 to 5 feet long from head to tail. That makes the bird impressive to see, even when it isn't flying. With a wingspan of about 9½ feet, and weighing between 16 and 23 pounds, they're especially impressive in flight.

Adults are a dull black with white coloring under their wings. Their bald heads are covered with yellow, orange and red skin.

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Young condors have a black head and don't have the white underwings the adults have. But they're about the same size as the adults. They're just as impressive to see on the ground or in the air.

Taking care of their young

Condors usually reach maturity when they're 6 to 7 years old. When they reach that age, they choose a mate. They'll remain with that mate for the rest of their life.

Condors usually lay a single egg on the floor of a small cave or crevice on the side of a cliff. Both parents help incubate the egg. It takes about 56 days for the egg to hatch.

After the egg hatches, the young condor will remain in its cave for about two to three months. Then it will venture out, but it won't fledge (take its first flight) until it's five or six months old.

The young condor's parents will take care of it for a full year, and sometimes even longer. Because of their devotion to their young, the condor pair may nest every two years instead of every year.

For more information about the Day of the Condor viewing event, call the DWR's Southern Region office at (435) 865-6100.

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See "Flying Fish Hawks"

DWR hosts annual Osprey Watch

Dutch John -- Ospreys—also called "flying fish hawks"—will be on display June 20 near the dam at Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

June 20 is the day the Division of Wildlife Resources will host its annual Osprey Watch. The free wildlife viewing event will be held on the peninsula that's opposite the Flaming Gorge Dam visitor center in northeastern Utah.

"Flaming Gorge hosts one of the largest inland populations of ospreys in North America," says Ron Stewart, regional conservation outreach manager for the DWR.

"Last year, there were 36 active nests on the reservoir itself and another five below the dam," Stewart says. "Several nests are visible in the area near the dam. You can see the nests easily from there."

Stewart will have spotting scopes set up between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Information about ospreys will also be available.

"You're invited to drop by, see one of Utah's most specialized birds and learn more about this highly talented fishing hawk," he says.

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To reach the viewing site, turn into the Flaming Gorge Dam parking lot from Highway 191. Park, and then walk to the watching area located on the peninsula opposite the visitor center at the dam.

For more information, call the DWR's Northeastern Region office at (435) 781-9453.

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Contact: Ron Stewart, DWR Northeastern Region Conservation Outreach Manager
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Catching Tiger Trout

Anglers are spreading the word: tiger trout are a beautiful fish that put up a big fight. And they taste great on the table!

If you want to hook one of these fighters, you need to toss aside some of the techniques you've used to catch rainbow trout. Catching tiger trout requires understanding the fish and utilizing a new set of strategies and tactics.

Tiger trout

A tiger trout is created by fertilizing a brown trout egg with brook trout milt and then heat shocking the egg. The result is a sterile hybrid whose appearance and behavior is a mixture of both species.

Since tiger trout are sterile (meaning they can't reproduce), all of the fishes' energy can be directed towards growing. This creates a fast growing and aggressive fish that's a great fighter.

Tiger trout are voracious predators. They prey heavily on small fish, including Utah chubs, redbreast shiners and other minnows. Because tigers favor natural foods, it's tough to catch them using PowerBait, marshmallows and other commercially prepared baits.

When you fish for tigers is also an important consideration. You'll find the most success fishing early in the morning or late in the evening.

Depending on the phase of the moon, nighttime can also be a good time to fish. Tigers will often feed at night when the moon lights up the surface.

Mid-day is the least effective time to fish.

Warm season fishing

As the temperature rises in the summer, tiger trout move into deeper, cooler water. Some tips for catching tigers in the summer are available below.

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Fishing from the shore

If you're fishing from the shore, fish right at daybreak or as the sun goes down in the evenings. The water in the shallows is cooler during those times of the day. The cooler water draws tiger trout into the shallows to feed on bait fish.

When the fish move into the shore, fly anglers can do really well using large, silver streamers. Spin cast anglers can do well using a lure that imitates a minnow. A Rapala, for example, is a great lure for spin cast anglers to try.

During the middle part of the day, a sunburn is probably all you'll catch from the shore in the summer!

Fishing from a float tube or a pontoon boat

If you're fly-casting from a float tube or a pontoon boat, and the trout are rising to feed, use floating line with patterns that imitate the insects that are near the surface. These insects will include damsel flies, midges, mosquitoes and flying ants.

If an insect hatch is occurring, it can be tough to catch tigers: your fly will have to compete with all of the natural insects that are available to the fish.

If the trout aren't rising, fly anglers should try a wet fly weighted with sinking line. Effective warm-season patterns include dark-colored leeches, wooly buggers, minnow imitations, scuds and nymphs. Remember that these summertime fly patterns need to be tied on a hook size that's smaller than you'd use at other times of the year.

Spin-casting anglers can take advantage of the fact that tiger trout are vulnerable to spoons, spinners and lures that excite their aggressive nature. Be sure to fish in deep, cool water.

Fishing from a boat

Trolling for tigers is a great way to catch them from boats. Some anglers prefer pop gear coupled with a nightcrawler or a terminal lure. Lures and spinners used on their own can also be effective. The Jakes Spin-a-Lure is probably the best all-around lure for tiger trout. Other effective lures for tiger trout include Triple Teasers and Kastmasters.

If you like to still-fish, try dropping a dead minnow or a straight nightcrawler into cool, deep water. Then retrieve it back in a way that makes the bait look like it's alive.

Whenever possible, use a fish graph to locate fish or areas that have promising bottom topography and structure. Dropping your bait or lure into a school of fish or promising habitat will make a huge difference in your success rate.

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Description

Tiger trout have a pattern of wormy markings (known as vermiculations) on their back. These markings are similar to the markings on a brook trout. At times, the markings will be light on top with a dark background. At other times, the reverse is true—the markings will be dark and the background light.

The lower fins often have a white leading edge, and tigers have a squared-off tail.

On the underside of a tiger trout, the color can vary from a pale gold to a bright red. The richness of the color depends on the sex of the fish (males are more colorful than females) and the time of the year.

Tigers are the brightest in the fall, during their spawning period. In the winter, the species can appear grayish or brown. During this time of the year, the fish may also have dark, wormy markings over a silver background.

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