

TR: Bio-life and Bugs at 11,000 ft.

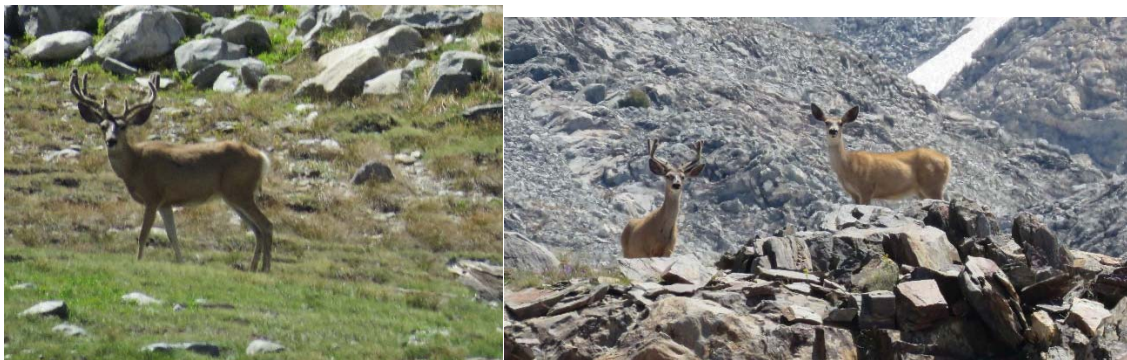
This is my first TR so I apologize if the format/information falls short of the expectations for this auspicious group. This web interface is also new to me. I have been a student of wilderness camping for more than 45 years and my passion is to share the experience and learning with friends and family. A custom fly rod with a feather for exploring and divining the location of large trout is my excuse to get out and visit every creek, lake and waterfall in the area. The adventure is the never-ending search for ever larger trout while the photo memories of rainbows, sunsets, wildlife and contemplation while sitting on a waterfall, add to the joy of the experience. Currently, my camping partner is 80 years young so we limit the destinations to keep the total trip length down to what we can manage in a weeks' time.

Specifically, I wanted to follow up with subsequent observations on snow levels and lake ice out conditions from the excellent TR by Robert Seeburger. The reference link to his TR is <http://www.highsierratopix.com/community/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=16335&hilit=robertseeburger> Combining his observations and the information below may help others in future trip planning to correlate snow levels and specifically ice out timelines on High Sierra mountain lakes.

We departed from the Florence Lake trail head on 7/26/2017 and targeted Martha and Davis Lake as destinations (up and back) via Goddard Canyon over the course of one week. As noted elsewhere Southern California Edison has permission to drain the Florence Lake reservoir this year for dam maintenance. The ferry boat captain expected sometime around August 15 the ferry service across the reservoir would end when the water level became too low. In which case, there is a trail around the reservoir that could be used. The sign indicated it is 4.5-miles.

Also, as expected, any place there was a significant amount of greenery and ground moisture from melting snow or runoff, the misquotes were fierce at level 4. In the higher, drier(rocky), colder elevations the misquote level was a manageable 2.

On the lightly used path past the Hell For Sure trail junction, we expected a wet wade across Martha lake outlet would be required. This was not difficult in the meadow below Martha Lake. Which is where we also observed wild elements from the local Boy's and Girl's Club"



The total surprise was is nearly August, and Martha Lake was still >90% frozen on 7/28. Based on more information below, it could be at least three more weeks before Martha is ice free.

Here is a comparison of Rob's photo and our visit from near the Martha Lake outlet.



Robert Seeburger ~7/14/2017

14 days later

My photo 7/28/2017

A high up view shows Martha Lake is still about 90% frozen and it is almost August



We stayed overnight near the outlet of Martha. In the late evening after sunset we did see a few rings from trout rising in the small opening at the outlet. However, it seemed like the activity level of the trout was in slow motion. The next morning there was a thin skin of new ice, demonstrating that even near August 1, high mountain lakes can be still cold enough to freeze. Martha Lake seemed to collect and trap more snow than surrounding areas at the same elevation. Plus, the local topography with peaks east, south, and west reduced the solar illumination to restrict melting rates. Clearly Martha Lake will be mostly frozen well into August whereas a smaller lake slightly northeast and 200ft higher was 50% melted as we passed by it on the way to Davis Lake.

Our next destination was cross country to Davis Lake. The high flow rate of the outlet creek from Davis Lake made wet wading nearly impossible. But we did find multiple snow bridges (greater than 5 ft thick) in the narrow canyon to facilitate crossing as needed. What is most interesting is to compare similar ice out photos for Davis Lake at different calendar dates versus Martha Lake. If we zoom in on Robert's high view of upper and lower Davis Lake it is clear they are mostly frozen. Whereas at the time of my visit the upper and lower (not shown) Davis Lake were 90% ice free. Curiously, there was one bay on lower Davis that looked like the ice extend to the bottom of the lake, more than six feet below the surface. Again,

demonstrating the strong effects of local topological conditions.



Robert Seeburger's ~ 7/10/2017 is >90% ice. 21 days later 7/31/2017 shows < 10% ice.

So comparing Martha and Davis Lake it seems to take about three weeks from first hints of thawing around the shore line to ice out for lakes around 11,000ft. Davis Lake has much more variety of exposure to southern and western solar illumination. So, Davis Lake seems to melt out sooner than Martha lake. So, the timing of ice out can be estimated by correlating with the Ca Department of water snow weight sensors[1] or the National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center snow information[2] referenced below. This historical snow depth data can be added to the Google Earth early spring lake images across the years and field observations of actual ice out timing.

Also recall in Robert's TR there was some discussion about the type of insects found in the stomach contents of the trout he caught for dinner. Through careful observation at both Martha and Davis it was possible to see Caddis Fly larva in their cases moving around in the shallow water rocks with mossy vegetation. The cases were about 25mm long. A quick search on Google for Caddis Fly larva images, sans case, shows larva which look exceeding like the images that Robert posted.



~25mm Caddis fly larva case.

Hawk Moth dancing among wild flowers

So, when sitting on a waterfall with a view towards forever, waving a fly rod at the local trout, one can experience, observe, and learn many things about the wilderness. When you are listening to a coyote howl at the moon, watching a bald eagle fly over at sunset, or the dance of the diminutive hummingbird like, hawk moth sipping nectar from mountain wildflowers there is no better place to be for sharing the experience with friends and family.



Ref 1: Ca Department of Water Resources, Cooperative Snow Surveys.

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/current/snow/index2.html>

Ref 2: Individual Sierra Nevada Snow Depth Observations

From National Weather Service. National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center.

http://www.nohrsc.noaa.gov/nsa/reports.html?region=Sierra_Nevada&var=snowdepth&dy=2017&dm=7&dd=2&units=e&sort=value&filter=0