




Convict Lake





Convict Lake

Suggested Flies for the Convict Lake area:
[Eastern Sierra Hatch Selection](#)

- For the Lake:

Stillwater Flies:

 - Woolly Buzzer #8-10
 - Krystal Buggers #8-10
 - Clouser Minnow (Black/Silver/blue) #6-8
 - Mohair Leech #8-10
 - Marabou Muddler #6-10
- For the Creek:


Nymphs:

 - Hare's Ear Nymph #12-14
 - Pheasant Tail Nymph #12-14
 - Bird Nest #12-14
 - A.P. Nymph #12-14
- Drys:

 - Olive Caddis #12-16
 - Yellow Humpy #14-16

Directions:

Convict Lake is located 35 miles north of Bishop, CA or 4 miles south of the route 203 turnoff for Mammoth Lakes, CA. Convict Lake Road is opposite the Mammoth Lakes Airport. The lake is just two miles west of Highway 395.

 Convict Lake Directions

Notes:

Convict Lake (168 acres) at 7,580' is a very clear-water lake developed by a moraine dam created from retreating glaciers. The bottom is composed of granitic boulders with sand/gravel with an average depth of 100 feet and the deepest areas up to 140 feet. There is little aquatic vegetation and the water is slightly acidic. The lake had a reputation for big **Browns** but these have become much less numerous in recent years. There are plenty of **Rainbow** planters near the boat jetty and along the southeastern shoreline as 43,000 are planted annually on a weekly basis. The larger fish hang out in the deeper water on the southern shore beyond the end of the road. The Lake record for Rainbows is 13 Lbs. 7 oz. A good place to fish is the inlet of Convict Creek. Streamers are your best bet, particularly Woolly Buggers in black, brown, and olive colors. Some of the guides like to use pink buggers in the Spring to imitate Rainbow fry. Work the drop-offs at about 20' depth with a full sinking line. The season is the last Saturday of April to November 15th.

Convict Creek, just below the outlet, often contains large trout that have left the lake. It is also planted heavily since the nearby campgrounds offer heavy fishing pressure. Better flyfishing opportunities on the creek occur below Hwy 395 where Convict Creek merges with McGee Creek before flowing into **Lake Crowley**. The creek contains Rainbows and Browns. Rainbows from Crowley Lake will move into the creek during the Spring Months for spawning. Browns will utilize the creek for spawning in the Fall. There is a general 5 trout limit within the lake and the creek just below the outlet. A study area by UC Berkeley is posted around the Hwy 395 area and is closed to fishing. Convict Creek, including side channels and meanders, in the U.C. study area as posted. This area begins about 1/2 mile above the Highway 395 bridge and extends upstream about 1/2 mi. Below the study area, the creek has new regulations starting March 1st, 2021. Saturday preceding Memorial Day through Sept. 30. 5 trout per day.

Above the creek inlet to the lake is a trail that will take you to the **Convict Lake Backcountry**. This trail reaches a number of high elevation lakes consisting of brookies, such as Bright Dot Lake, Bighorn Lake, Lake Dorothy, Lake Genevieve, and Edith Lake. It is about a 4-6 miles hike with a 3,000 foot elevation gain.

The lake is named after a group of convicts escaped from a Carson City jail in Nevada, Sept 17th 1871. A posse trapped the convicts on Sept 24th at the lake two members of the posse were killed, Robert Morrison and Mono Jim. Nearby Mount Morrison is named for the deceased merchant of Benton and the smaller below it is named Mono Jim. The convicts escaped but were captured a few days later in Round Valley and lynched near Bishop. A movie called, "The Secret of Convict Lake" starring Glen Ford and Gene Tierney was made in 1951 and brought recognition to the area. Previous to its renaming, the lake was known as "nap" by the local Piutes and the lake was called Monte Diablo Lake by local settlers and miners. From a Sierra Club Bulletin Vol.IX, San Francisco, CA 1915, I Forbes wrote, "The streams which flowed from the mountains were supposed to be filled with Pot-sa-wa-gees, water babies, who lived in spirit, but were visible eye, having the face of an Indian child and the body of a fish. Hi-na-nu was a wise and good man, whose spirit the Indians revered, and to whom they looked for guidance in earthly matters. However, he was endeavoring to capture the Pot-sa-wa-gees as they traveled up stream. When the sources of the streams were reached the water became so shallow that the water babies were in great danger of being taken by their pursuer. They prayed to the Great Spirit for aid, and in answer he caused the waters to flow up hill and to join the waters flowing down from the mountains, uniting in one large, deep lake, wherein the little spirits found safety —Wit-sa-nap, the Convict Lake of to-day."

A resort with cabins, store, and restaurant are available at the lake. The Convict Lake Resort started in 1929 owned by Bill Garner. It was sold to the Wenger family in 1962 and sold once more to the Balarsky Family in 1982, the current owners. Quite a few improvements have been made recently with new cabins, some capable of holding large groups. Campsites are available with shower facilities available behind the store. The store provides most of your essential needs and has expanded deckspace for drinking a beer. The restaurant is renowned for an excellent cuisine and has a bar available. In addition, Convict Lake also has a Marina and a Pump Station. Campsites fill fast on the weekend and using the reservation system is recommended. A camp host resides at the campsite and can provide firewood.

The **Laurel Lakes** drain into Laurel Creek which follows the jeep road. There are two lakes. Each contain **Golden Trout** and are about 1/2 mile from the end of the road. One lake (3 acres) is at 10,000', the other (8 acres) at 10,550'.

Fishing Regulations (Effective March 1st, 2021)

Convict Lake:

Last Saturday in Apr. through Nov. 15. No restrictions. 5 trout per day. 10 trout in possession.

Convict Creek upstream of the U.C. study area.:

From the last Saturday in April through November 15, 5 trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession; and, from November 16 through the Friday preceding the last Saturday in April, 0 trout bag limit, artificial lures with barbless hooks only and trout must be released unharmed and not removed from the water.

Convict Creek downstream of U.C. Study Area:

Sat. preceding Memorial Day through Sep. 30. 5 trout per day. Summer only to protect Fall, Winter, and Spring spawning

All other creeks and tributaries:

From the last Saturday in April through November 15, 5 trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession; and, from November 16 through the Friday preceding the last Saturday in April, 0 trout bag limit, artificial lures with barbless hooks only and trout must be released unharmed and not removed from the water.

