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Agnew Lake Backcountry



Suggested Flies for the Agnew Lakes area:
Eastern Sierra Hatch Selection

Other Local Favorites:

Streamer Files:

Woolly Bugger #8-10
Marabou Muddler #8-10
Matuku #8-10

Nymphs:

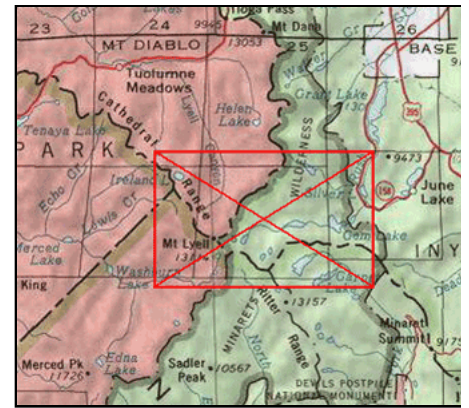
Hare's Ear Nymph #16-18
Pheasant Tail Nymph #16-18
Bird Nest #16-18
A.P. Nymph #16-18
Golden Stone Nymph #8-10

Drys:

Olive Caddis #14-20
Yellow Humpy #14-16
Royal Wulff #14-16
Chernobyl Ant #14-16
Madam X #14-16

Directions:

The most direct way into the Agnew Lake Backcountry is through the Silver Lake Trailhead on the June Lake Loop near Silver Lake. You can access the June Loop from Hwy 395, north of Mammoth Lakes. A 2.5 mile hike up an elevation gain of 1300 feet will get you there. The other entrances to this area are by the Pacific Crest trail or the John Muir Trail. From the south, the John Muir and PCT split up at Devil's Postpile near Mammoth. The John Muir Trail takes the left side of the MF San Joaquin while the PCT takes the east side and they meet up again at Thousand Island Lake. From the north, the two trails are same side of Yosemite National Park over Donohue Pass.



Notes:

The Agnew Lake Backcountry is named for Theodore C. Agnew, a miner who settled this area in 1877. Mr Agnew lived in Agnew Meadows, near Mammoth assisted the newly-formed Yosemite National Park from environmental degradation by keeping sheep herders from driving their sheep through these lands Park. He received commendations from Captain Alexander Rogers, acting Superintendent of Yosemite NP in 1895, within a letter to the Secretary of Interior Agnew Lake, Agnew Pass, and Agnew Meadows are all named in his honor. Most of this area can be fished with a 3-4 wt rod as the fish are somewhat small. However, due to the windy conditions, you might prefer a 5-6 wt rod to adequately fish the lakes. The water is clear, so 5x-6x tippets are best with a shorter leader to provide good turnover on windy days. Bears are plentiful in this area and bearproof containers are required as well as wilderness permits for overnights.

From the Silver Lake Trailhead you can reach the following:

Agnew Lake: It is 37 acres at an elevation of 8,508 feet and is a 2 hour hike out of Silver Lake Pack Station of 2 miles with a 1300 foot gain. Agnew was a lake that was expanded by a dam in the 1920's. It provides the hydroelectric power for the communities of Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, and Lee Vining. Access is very limited due to the steepness of the shoreline. Contains **Rainbows** and **Brookies**.

Gem Lake: 246 acre lake at 9050 feet and is about 2.6 miles from the trailhead. It is named "Gem" due to Theodore Agnew's reference of this lake being the "Gem-O-the-Mountains" and referenced as such in McClure's mapping of the area in 1896. Gem was a natural lake that was dammed in the early 1920's to create a much larger lake. Gem Lake contains Rainbows and Brookies. The best areas are the Rush Creek and Crest Creek inlets, particularly in the Spring.

Alger Lakes: Going around the northern shore of Gem Lake, the trail forks to Alger Lakes about 4 miles from the Gem Lakes trailhead onto the Alger Lakes trail. Follow the trail northwards for about 3.6 miles with a 1500 foot gain. Alger consists of three lakes at an elevation of 10,700 feet. Two lakes are 45 acres and one lake is 18 acres. The lakes were named for John Alger, a packer for the USGS in 1909. The lakes contain **Golden Trout** that were introduced through stocking that Alger, himself, may have introduced. However, subsequent aerial plantings in the 1950's and 60's of Goldenfish raised at the Mt Whitney hatchery with the eggs collected at Cottonwood Lakes were also a source. The brood source at Cottonwood Lakes was contaminated by Rainbows at some time in the 1960's and the Goldenfish at Alger Lakes are considered Golden hybrids, although the genetic purity is quite high. Stocking was discontinued in the 1970's and the Goldenfish at Alger Lakes are self-sustaining using Alger Creek as a spawning area. It is about a 6-7 hour hike from the Gem Lake Trailhead at Silver Lake, so a visit to Alger would best be an overnight one. Most use the lower lake for camping. The lakes are prone to windy conditions with strong up-slope winds during the day bringing terrestrials such as ants and beetles to the lakes. Most of the Goldenfish are in the 14-16 inch range but there are some over 20 inches. Daphnia is a rich food source that is available within these lakes, as well as an abundant population of mayflies and caddis. This food source allows the Goldenfish to reach larger sizes.

Rush Creek: Within the backcountry, Rush Creek is unfishable between Agnew Lake and June Lake Loop Road due to grade. It is fishable between Gem Lake and Waugh Lake. This area covers about 1.7 miles from 9,100 feet to 9,420 feet as a freestone stream. From the backside of Gem Lake you are about 4.5 miles from the trailhead. Contains Rainbows and Brookies. The forks area of Rush Creek above Waugh Lake near the John Muir Trail/PCT is another good section to contain brookies in the 8 inch class.

Waugh Lake: About 6 miles from the Trailhead at an elevation 9,420 feet. The trail follows the northern shoreline for about 1.7 miles. Waugh Lake is actually a reservoir when Upper Rush Creek Meadow was dammed in 1919. The lake is not planted but does contain Brookies from Upper Rush Creek and other trout. Often the lake is drawn quite low by Fall and the trout tend to migrate back into the streams.

Lost Lakes: At the northwest shore of Waugh Lake you must follow the outlet creek of Lost Lakes northward off-trail for 1.5 miles to reach the first lake. The elevation is 10,600. Following the inlet creek on the northern shore you can reach the second lake in about .75 miles at an elevation of 11,050. The third is the largest and is about .5 miles northwest of the second lake at an elevation of 10,960 feet. Each lake consists of Goldenfish.

Weber Lake: Taking the south fork of the trail at the eastern side of Waugh Lake, you can reach this lake in another .8 miles or 6.8 miles total from the Trailhead. Elevation is 9900 feet with a 500 foot gain above Waugh. Consists of Brookies.

Sullivan Lake: The trail drops down 200 feet and ends at Sullivan Lake at an elevation is 9400 feet. It is 1.25 miles from the trail fork at Waugh Lake or a total of 7.25 miles from the trailhead. Consists of Brookies.

Clark Lakes: Clark Lakes consists of about 5 small lakes. Best reached by taking the southern trail from the eastern shore of Agnew Lake. There is a gain of about 1.7 miles from Agnew or a total of 3.7 miles from the trailhead. The elevation of the first lake is 9950 feet. The largest lake is .5 miles further at an elevation of 9800 feet. All of the lakes have good Brookie fishing. Clark Lake #3, 4, and 5 were planted with Goldenfish in 1999 but reports are that these plan to be eaten by the larger Brookies. Clark Lake #1 is the closest to Agnew Lake and the lakes are numbered from east to west. Clark #2 is the largest with the most fish. The shorelines are easily waded with both dries and nymphs being productive.

Thousand Island Lake: The lake is one of the largest high-country lakes at 320 acres at an elevation of 9,850 feet and is the headwaters for the San Joaquin River. John Muir considered it to be the most beautiful lake within the Sierras. It is about 6.3 miles from the trailhead at an elevation of 9850 feet. The lake has 6 miles of shoreline. Flyfishing is particularly good during the late Spring and early Summer after ice-out. After that period, the trout tend to stay within deep water out of reach of a flyline. The DFG plants about 30,000 fingerlings annually. These generally holdover into a size range of 9-10 inches. The lake is renowned for windy conditions and camping restrictions apply. Consists of Rainbows and Brookies.

Emerald Lake: This 7 acre lake is about .5 miles southeast of Thousand Island Lake or 6.74 miles from the trailhead. Elevation is 9880 feet. Emerald is a good place to camp if nearby Thousand Island Lake is full. CDFW indicates that Emerald is fishless and it may be at this time. Past reports indicated a population of rainbow trout.

Ruby Lake: This 10 acre lake is 7.1 miles from the trailhead, about .25 miles past Emerald Lake. Elevation is 9880 feet. The shoreline along the trail is fishless. Consists of Rainbows.

Garnet Lake: The trail drops down from Ruby to 212 acre Garnet Lake over .75 miles or 7.9 miles from the trailhead. The trail follows the northern shore to outlet creek which drops to the MF San Joaquin River. Elevation is 9840 feet. About 18,000 fingerling rainbows are planted annually resulting in some good brookie fishing in the 10-14 inch range. The lake consists of about 100 small islands. Consists of Rainbows and Brookies.

Altha Lake: This 14 acre lake is about 8.5 miles from the trailhead. Elevation is 9680 feet. Usually has a good evening bite. Consists of Rainbows.

Laura Lake: This lake can be reached from Altha Lake by going off-trail about .75 miles southeast or 9.2 miles from the trailhead. Elevation is 9600 feet. Popular with Packers due to the good horse camping sites. CDFW indicates that it is fishless but past reports show Rainbows mostly in the 8-9 inch class.

Davis Lakes: From the western shore of Waugh Lake, you can take the trail further to Davis Lakes. Consists of two lakes about 9.4 miles from the trailhead. Elevation is 9,900 feet for the first lake and 10,275 feet for the second lake. These lakes are prone to windy conditions. The shorelines are rocky with drop-holding trout. The outlet of the lower lake tends to be shallow and a good dry fly opportunity. Consists of Brookies.



Marie Lakes: Going westward from Waugh Lake, you meet the PCT, Follow the PCT northward and the trail forks off to the west in about .75 miles. The lake is 10.25 miles from the trailhead. Two lakes, one at 10,850 feet and the other at 11,240 feet. Consists of Rainbows.

Fishing Regulations

Agnew Lake, Gem, and Waugh Lakes:

Open all year, five trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession.

Silver Lake:

Last Saturday in Apr. through Nov 15. 5 trout per day. 10 trout in possession.

All other Lakes and Reservoirs within Inyo and Mono Counties (with exceptions):

Open all year, five trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession.

Thousand Island and Garnet Lakes:

Open all Year. 5 trout per day. 10 trout in possession.

All other Lakes and Reservoirs outside of Inyo and Mono Counties:

Open all Year. 5 trout per day. 10 trout in possession.

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 day in April, 0 trout bag limit, artificial lures with barbless hooks only and trout must be released unharmed and not removed from the water.