

Wickiup Reservoir producing Browns, Rainbows and Kokanee

by Scott_Staats

The bald eagle flew low over the lodgepoles and hovered about 10 feet above the water only 25 yards from our boat, attracted to the jumping kokanee and trout.

Keith Morrow with a 4 pound rainbow. Photo by Scott Staats Keith Morrow and I joined fishing guide John Garrison recently for a day of fishing on Wickiup Reservoir. Situated among Oregon's high Cascade lakes, Wickiup is home to trophy brown and rainbow trout as well as large numbers of kokanee.

“From now through July are excellent times to fish Wickiup,” said Garrison, owner of Garrison's Guide Service in Sunriver.

He suggests trolling for browns early and late in the day with lures such as Rapalas in the main part of the reservoir and in the Deschutes arm. Large rainbows also hang out in the arm. Garrison catches browns up to 12 pounds and rainbows up to nine pounds, each averaging two to four pounds.

We started the morning jigging for kokanee. Although each of us hooked fish, none made it into the boat so we tried our luck for trout up the Deschutes arm. Here we had better luck. Morrow brought the biggest fish to the net - a plump 4-pound, 22-inch rainbow. We also landed five brown trout, the biggest about 18 inches.

Iâ€™ve been on other trips with Garrison when his clients landed some big trout. For Dennis Anderson of Gresham, Wickiup will always be one of his most memorable fishing trips ever. Within a few hours he caught the largest rainbow and brown trout of his life.

When Anderson finally landed the rainbow after a few minutes of fighting it, all of us in the boat just stared in awe at the 27-inch, six-pound 12-ounce fish. Just after lunch Anderson hooked into a 22-inch, five-pound brown trout and released it. â€œThe browns here at Wickiup are a strong, hardy fish and will give you the best fight of your life for trout,â€• said Garrison.

Most anglers are having good luck in the Deschutes arm of the reservoir fishing from boats, but shore anglers also have luck. In the last few years, Twin Lakes Resort has reported some large trout coming from Wickiup,

including a brown trout caught from shore that weighed in at 25 pounds, a few pounds short of the state record.

Fishing Guide John Garrison with a brown trout. Photo: Scott Staats I hooked into my largest brown ever and got it right up to the boat before it broke the line. It appeared to be over five pounds and I never had a trout that size fight so hard. The line screamed off the reel as soon as it hit.

Kokanee were jumping almost everywhere in the Deschutes arm. Several times we saw large browns jump right out of the water while chasing the kokanee. "When a big brown jumps," Garrison explained, "if you can cast into the ring it leaves with just about anything, you'll have a good chance of getting a hit."

On my last trip to Wickiup with Steve Lundgren of Redmond, we trolled and jigged for kokanee in the main reservoir and came home with five nice, tasty fish.

According to Steve Marx, fish biologist with ODFW in Bend, Wickiup has natural production for both kokanee and redbands (rainbow trout). However, the state stocks about 6,000 brown trout fingerlings each year.

“The trout populations in Wickiup have been down a bit in the past few years due to low water levels,” said Marx, “but with a few good back-to-back water years and numbers will be up again.”

Wickiup Reservoir is the largest body of water along the Cascade Lakes Highway, covering about 10,000 acres when full and 60 feet deep. It sits at an elevation of 4,350 feet. The reservoir is named for the wickiup poles left by Native Americans when they came to the area while fishing and hunting. They made shelters by covering the poles with brush or tree limbs. When the area was flooded in 1949, the poles could still be seen.

Fish species found in the reservoir include browns, rainbows, kokanee, whitefish and largemouth bass. Trees have also been placed in several areas to provide more habitat for fish.

Trout will hit Rapalas, worms, PowerBait, dragonfly nymphs and a variety of flies. For kokanee, troll with typical kokanee gear or try jigging. The bass hit plugs and plastics.

The limit on kokanee is 25. The fish have been averaging 10 to 12 inches. The limit for trout is five per day with only one over 20 inches. The Deschutes arm is closed to fishing from September 1 to October 31 when the kokanee are spawning. See the regulations for additional restrictions.

There are several boat launches at the reservoir. Camping, lodging and boat rentals are available. For more information, contact Garrison's Guide Service 593-8394 or Twin Lakes Resort at 593-6526.

Scott Staats is a fulltime outdoor writer who has lived in Central Oregon the last ten years. His articles have appeared in local, regional and national publications.

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