

Wildlife Viewing: Lewiston Lake & the Trinity River

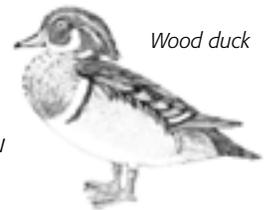
Weaverville Ranger Station • Trinity Unit • Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity N.R.A.
Shasta-Trinity National Forest



Anna's hummingbird

Lewiston Lake lies just downstream from Trinity Dam and just north of the town of Lewiston. It serves as a "forebay" reservoir for the Central Valley Project which means that it is a constant level lake. Water from Lewiston Lake is diverted through a long tunnel to the Carr Powerhouse on Whiskeytown Lake and then to the Keswick Powerhouse where it empties into the Sacramento River for water users in the Central Valley. Lewiston lake lies within the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. It is a beautiful lake with 15 miles of wooded shoreline and several marsh areas that provide prime habitat for a variety of birds, including many song birds. The cold waters of the lake contain a good population of trout which draws ospreys and bald eagles for the fishing. The water and the shore-line riparian zone attract a variety of mammals both small and large. Reptiles and amphibians frequent the Lake and the immediate shoreline.

At the base of Lewiston Dam is the **Trinity River Hatchery** and the Fly Fishing Stretch of the Trinity River. The Hatchery provides an excellent opportunity for learning about the life cycle of the anadromous fish that spawn in the river. Watch for ospreys, eagles, river otters and great blue herons along the river below the Dam.



Wood duck



Bewick's wren

The **Sven-Olbertson Side Channel** is located downstream from the Hatchery. It is a project designed to enhance overwintering habitat for anadromous fish on this section of the Trinity River. It also provides for riparian habitat improvements that benefit other animals the area. This is a great place to view steelhead and salmon spawning and to watch for wildlife.

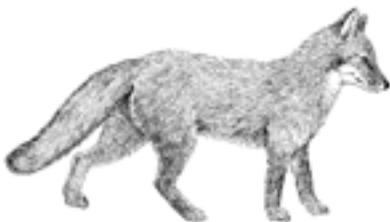
Mammals...

River otters can be seen anytime of the day. Otters are long and slender and their coats are shiny and dark when wet. They are one of the largest of the weasel family. You might see one frolicking along the bank, sliding into the water and swimming with their heads above water.



Beavers are large, compact rodents with flat, leathery tails. The most obvious sign of a beaver is its lodge built of sticks, branches and mud. When alarmed they will slap the water with their broad tails producing a sound that can be heard at a considerable distance.

Raccoons and foxes are most active at night, but are often afoot around dusk and dawn. Look for raccoons hunting along the water's edge for crayfish, fish, and aquatic insects. It is their habit of grabbing underwater prey with their hands that led to the misconception that they "wash" their food.



Gray foxes hunt in the vegetation along the lake's edge. Their favorite foods are berries, bird eggs, and small mammals. They are wary of humans and can be difficult to spot in the wild.

Deer can be seen at all hours of the day, especially at dusk, feeding along the shoreline. They are usually tolerant of human presence but will flee if they feel threatened. **Bear** frequent the area all year and can be seen occasionally when the salmon spawn in the river. Bear feed on the dying salmon. **Mountain lions** and **bobcats** are present in the area but rarely seen.

Birds...



Great blue herons wade the shorelines as they stalk for fish and frogs. Often they can be seen standing motionless in the shallow water as they wait for a passing meal. They are easily distinguished from eagles and ospreys when they fly because of their long, slender bodies, long beaks and hoarse croaking call. There are several heron rookeries on Lewiston lake.

Snow-white **cattle egrets** frequent the riparian zone along the Trinity River below Lewiston Dam. They are about the same size as the great blue heron and hunt their prey in the same manner.

Mature **bald eagles** are easily recognized by their white heads and tails and dark bodies and wings. Their call is a classic eagle "scream." Eagles are a common sight on Lewiston Lake and visitors are often rewarded with the sight of a fishing eagle hitting the lake in a spray of white water to emerge seconds later with its catch of trout. Eagles nest in the area usually hiding the nest in the foliage of large trees where they find concealment.

Ospreys can be identified by their light undersides, black eye stripe and black wrist patches. They hold their wings bent while in flight much like a gull. An osprey's call is a series of two-note screams... "Ky-er, ky-er." They share the same fishing areas with eagles and fish in much the same manner. Look for them flying above the lake or sitting, perched, on tree limbs above the water while they look for prey. Ospreys nest in the area and usually build their nests in the tops of trees in open, conspicuous, places.

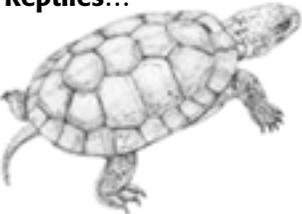


Belted kingfishers are fun to watch as they fish the shallow areas along the shorelines of the lake and river. They are a small blue bird with a white band around the throat, a white breast, a feathery top knot and a long beak. They have a high pitched, rattling, call that they make when they fly from perch to perch in search of prey... small fish and frogs.

Red-winged blackbirds nest in the marshy areas near the center of Lewiston lake. The males have a bright red patch on their shoulders and they can be seen throughout the year. Their call is a loud and very liquid "ok-a-lee!" These birds are very territorial and can be quite aggressive when you get too close to their nests and will attempt to chase you off.



Reptiles...



Western pond turtles are California's only native turtle and are a common sight on Lewiston Lake. They are generally about 7" long and spend warm spring and summer days basking in the sun on exposed logs and rocks in the water. They are quick to leave their perches when people get too close.

Other reptiles include the **western fence lizard** or "blue belly" (so named because males have two distinctive blue patches on their undersides). The common, **two lined garter snake** and **California king snakes** hunt the shallows of the lake for insects, fish and small mammals.



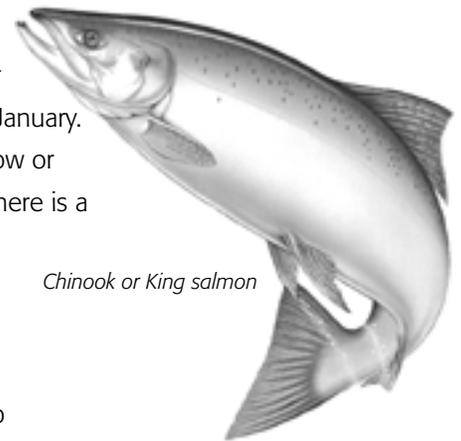
The anadromous fishery...

Before the turn of the century, spring-run Chinook salmon were by far the largest run of anadromous fish in the Klamath River Basin. When the run was at its height, the water was alive with these beautiful fish. In their turn, the steelhead and cohos echoed the runs of their larger relatives. It had been that way for millions of years. The construction of Trinity and Lewiston Dams in the late 1950s seriously altered flows in the river and deeply affected the habitat required by these fish. The Trinity River Fish Hatchery and Sven-Olbertson Side Channel were built to help alleviate some of these problems.

Anadromous fish, which include the Chinook, coho, and steelhead, spend most of their lives in the ocean. They journey into freshwater streams as adults returning to the spawning grounds where they were hatched. Anadromous fish are actually able to "sniff" out their own spawning stream from the confusion of ocean currents.

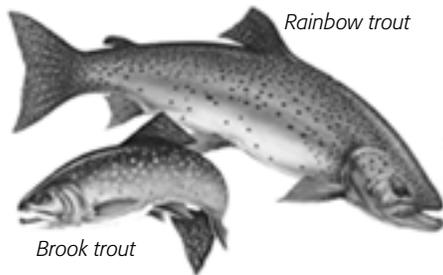
Fish...

Chinook (king) salmon, and Coho (Silver) salmon migrate up the Trinity River as far as Lewiston Dam in order to spawn. Salmon that enter the Trinity River Hatchery before spawning are stripped of their eggs and milt for artificial rearing in the hatchery. Look for Chinook salmon from mid-June through December and coho from mid-November into January. At the Hatchery you can walk across the parking lot and watch these fish in the river below or you can view them leaping the fish ladder through windows placed below water level. There is a self-guided tour of the hatchery where you can learn about fish propagation.



Chinook or King salmon

Steelhead trout hatch and live in the Trinity River until they have grown old enough to migrate downstream to the ocean. They live in the ocean for one to four years before returning to the river to spawn. The Sven-Olbertson Side Channel is an excellent place to watch this annual cycle with the steelhead as well as salmon.



Rainbow trout

Brook trout

Rainbow, brook and brown trout inhabit the waters of Lewiston lake. Rainbows are silvery while browns and brookies are darker with large reddish spots. Brookies have dark, wiggly lines on their backs.

If you watch for them carefully along the grassy banks of the river, you might see a **mink**. They are not exactly a common sight, but riparian areas in Trinity County do carry a healthy population of these little members of the weasel family. They are meat eaters and do go after fish in the shallows of the river.



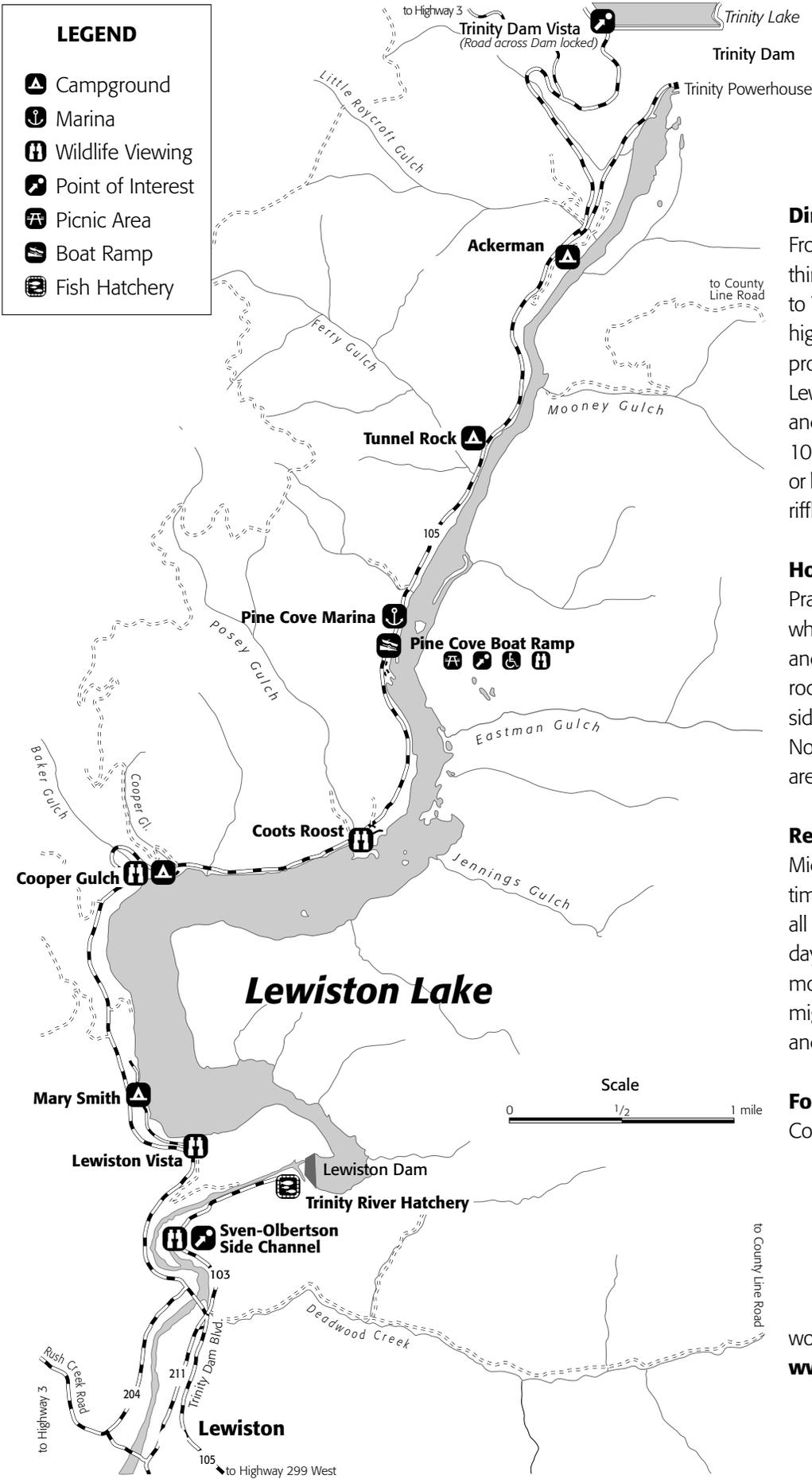
Mink

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Shasta-Trinity National Forest



LEGEND

- Campground
- Marina
- Wildlife Viewing
- Point of Interest
- Picnic Area
- Boat Ramp
- Fish Hatchery

Directions...

From Redding, take Highway 299 West thirty-seven miles. Turn right at the sign to Trinity Dam/Lewiston Lake on County highway 105 (Trinity Dam Boulevard); proceed 5.5 miles, through the town of Lewiston to the junction of Hatchery Road and Trinity Dam Boulevard (Co. Hwy. 105). Continue straight to Lewiston lake or bear right to the hatchery and spawning riffles.

How can you help?

Practice low impact visiting; pack out what you pack in. Practice walking slowly and softly; walk on hard surfaces and rocks especially when venturing along side or in streams during the months of November through May when fish eggs are incubating and the fry are emerging.

Recommended seasons...

Mid-spring through mid-fall is the best time to visit the Lewiston Lake area for all around viewing. But... warm winter days are excellent too. During the winter months there are large populations of migratory waterfowl, winter deer herds, and an occasional squirrel.

For more information...

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