

Washoe Lake



ANGLER AND FISH SURVEY INFORMATION **Sam Sedillo- Fisheries Biologist, Reno Office** **1100 Valley Rd, Reno, NV (775) 688-1882**

General information: Washoe Lake is a very shallow, productive water body located between Reno and Carson City. Washoe Lake covers an area of 5,800 acres when full and the big lake has a maximum depth of 12 feet. It is managed as a warm water fishery and contains White Bass, Sacramento Perch, Channel Catfish, Brown Bullhead, Common Carp, and White Crappie. Fishing is best in late spring, early summer, and early fall. Usually, late afternoon is the best time in the spring and fall, while the best fishing in summer occurs at night when the water temperature cools down.

Location and Access: Washoe Lake is located along U.S. 395 (I 580) in Washoe Valley between Carson City and Reno. The park can be accessed by turning onto East Lake Blvd from US 395 (I 580) a boat launch is located at the southeast corner of the lake. The north boat launch, which is a smaller facility, is located at the south end of Lakeshore Drive. From East Lake Blvd, turn west onto Lakeshore Drive and then head south until you reach the park entrance. Little Washoe Lake, located at the north end of East Lake Blvd, also has day use facilities with restrooms and beach areas. Access to the west side of the lake can be achieved by taking the Bellevue Road exit off US 395 (I 580).

Management: NDOW manages Washoe Lake as a put and take fishery for warmwater game species. NDOW also manages Scripps Wildlife Management Area, 2,351 acres between Big Washoe and Little Washoe Lakes, which is managed for waterfowl and other wetlands associated nongame birds. Nevada State Parks manages the facilities and campsites surrounding the lake.

General Info

- Washoe Lake State Park offers two boat launches, picnic areas, campsites, and bathroom facilities.
- No restrictions on boats, however, at Washoe Lake State Park Boat Ramps: All boat ramps and other areas designated by buoys are zones in which a vessel must be operated at a speed that leaves a flat wake, but in no case may a vessel be operated at a speed in excess of 5 nautical miles per hour.
- Due to elevated methylmercury levels, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public and Behavioral Health has issued a health advisory that recommends no consumption of White Bass from Little and Big Washoe lakes.
- While boating, be wary of changing weather conditions. Washoe Valley regularly experiences high winds in the afternoons.

Fishing Regulations

- Season is open year around, any hour of the day or night. Limit is 10 game fish of which not more than 5 may be catfish.

Additional Restrictions

- Scripps Wildlife Management Area is closed to trespass February 1 through June 30th.
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Previous stocking

2022

Channel Catfish 1450 8-11 inches

Fishing Notes

- Washoe Lake is primarily a warmwater fishery that experiences highs and lows during periods of wet and dry years.
- Fish in the afternoon in spring and fall for best success from the shore, fish pre-molded blood bait or dipped bait for catfish, small lures such as Kastmasters or Rapalas work well for White Bass, Largemouth Bass and Sacramento Perch. Small plastic tube jugs on a small, weighted jig hook in chartreuse, black or olive work well for catching the more aggressive fish.
- Wind is frequent on this lake, so fishing transition water where muddy water edges up to clear water is a good place to catch the more predatory fish in the lake.
- Morning, evening, and night fishing work well for catching catfish as their activity increases in low light conditions.
- Common Carp can be caught on both bait and fly. Carp will cruise the shallows starting in May and can be a fun sight fishing opportunity.

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2023 Fishing Forecast

Sam Sedillo– Fisheries Biologist
Reno Office



Water levels- As of April 2023, the Truckee Basin SNOTEL sites reported nearly 230% of average Snow Water Equivalent (snow pack) for the basin. This is a huge water year following three consecutive years of drought. Washoe and Little Washoe Lake should fill to capacity and remain full throughout the 2023 season.

White Bass and Largemouth Bass

White Bass are common in Little Washoe Lake and are one of the first fish to be restocked and repopulate Washoe Lake after it goes dry. Largemouth Bass are planned to be stocked in 2023. These fish can average 10"-12" and caught using plastic baits, small spinner lures, and crappie jigs. White Bass anglers are most successful in August and September. Expect fair to good fishing for these highly active fish.

Channel Catfish and Brown Bullhead

In 2022, Little Washoe Lake was stocked with 1,450 Channel catfish. Overall, catfish make up a large portion of the fish population in Washoe Lake when it is full. Catfish rely on sensory organs called barbels, which give them their cat like whiskers, to sense or "taste" their prey. Catfish will eat nearly anything that comes their way and can be caught on a wide assortment of bait and lures. In 2023, 1,000 Channel Catfish will be stocked in Little Washoe Lake which will provide opportunities for the public to catch this excellent game fish. The lake record Channel Catfish is a 17 lbs, 8 oz, but expect to catch them in the 2-5 lb range.

White Crappie

White Crappie are present but can be few and far between in Washoe Lake. Expect fair fishing for these small game fish. You can catch these fish on small crappie jigs, lures, and small nightcrawlers under a bobber.

Sacramento Perch

Perch fishing in Washoe Lake, like the other fisheries, is dependent on the amount of water that is available in the lake. They are not stocked but can persist in perennial spring fed areas during drought and are generally the first population to repopulate Washoe Lake after it goes dry. This member of the sunfish family can be easy to catch if they are around. Target them with small lures or nightcrawlers for best success.

Common Carp

Common Carp are ever present in the Washoe Lake system and will retreat to the small streams feeding into the lakes when the system runs dry, these introduced fish are generally bottom feeders and prey on aquatic invertebrates and small minnows or fish. You can catch them on both bait and with fly gear and they provide a fun sight fishing opportunity as they cruise the shallows looking for prey. Look for large, golden-brown shapes along the shoreline when trying to spot one of these fish.



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