



Early Strawberry fishing - origin and date unknown

In the early 1940s, a number of fishing camps began to appear at various locations around the reservoir. The cabins and other structures were sometimes short on appearance, but long on serviceability and provided great fun and long lasting memories for those who built and used them.



Frank Madsen's fishing camp – ca.1970

(In the early 1980s these camps were removed, and major roads were relocated to accommodate the higher level of the expanded reservoir)

In the mid 1940s, some species of undesirable fish were introduced into the reservoir presumably by bait fisherman, and during the late 1950s populations of Utah chub, Utah sucker, carp, and yellow perch had almost completely displaced the trout population. In October 1961, the reservoir was chemically treated with Rotenone to remove these undesirable fish, which proved to be highly successful, and permitted reestablishment of an excellent trout fishery that was maintained for over 20 years.

In the early 1970s, Utah chub subsequently reappeared in the reservoir, and presence of the Utah sucker was verified in 1978, the source of these re-introductions is not known. These populations expanded rapidly throughout the 1980s, and gill net surveys conducted during 1986 verified that over 90 percent of the biomass in the expanded reservoir was tied up by nongame fish. Fishing success remained relatively high during the mid '80s due in part to the rising water levels of the reservoir, however, it was apparent that the fishery would eventually collapse under the intensive interspecific competition with nongame fish. During 1990, the reservoir was once again chemically treated with Rotenone, which was the largest such known treatment ever attempted, and met the goal of a 99 percent removal of nongame fish. The reservoir was subsequently restocked with Bear Lake cutthroat trout, sterilized rainbow trout, and kokanee salmon. Limited numbers of Utah chub and Utah sucker were once again found in the reservoir in the spring of 1993. Although the early reappearance of these species was disappointing, their eventual return was anticipated. The current game fish assemblage in the reservoir is intended to resist major nongame fish re-infestations. Bear Lake cutthroat trout are voracious predators and are able to utilize the nongame fish as a forage base, sterilized rainbow trout are utilized since they cannot become hybridized with the cutthroat trout, and kokanee salmon do well since they compete for the same food resource, but inhabit a different niche within the reservoir than most of the other species. Since it is no longer feasible to chemically treat such a large body of water that Strawberry now is, it is vitally important that anglers be aware of the measures that have been taken to control the populations of nongame fish. The regulations for gamefish bag limits, and the size slot limits for cutthroat trout, (only 2 under 15 inches and 1 over 22 inches may be kept), currently in effect, although sometimes unpopular, are proving to be highly effective in controlling the nongame fish populations. The more restrictive cutthroat harvest regulations imposed in 2003 were largely intended to increase the population of adult cutthroat and to improve their age structure, with older, larger, cutthroat to prey on nongame fish. There was an immediate positive response to the overall adult population due to these regulations.



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More importantly, the age structure of the adult population has changed with more of the 5 and 6 year old fish than have ever been seen in the past. Extensive diet surveys show that the cutthroat are eating an estimated 850 tons, equating to nearly 64 million chubs, annually.

For many years, the Strawberry Anglers Association collected and published data that tracked various fish species progression and populations, which provided valuable information to the Utah DWR.

Strawberry has developed the reputation for consistently producing large rainbow and cutthroat trout, and sustains about 1.5 million hours of fishing pressure annually, (approximately the same number of angling trips as Lake Powell, which is more than 13 times its size). Strawberry Reservoir boasts the state angling record for cutthroat trout, a 26-lb. 12-oz. Yellowstone cutthroat taken in 1930.

Strawberry fishing has always had the reputation of being unpredictable, there is no guarantee that lures or baits that are successful one day, will catch fish the next. The old timers used to say, "If you caught fish today, you might as well take all the things you used and put them back in your tackle box tonight, because none of them are going to work tomorrow".

INTERESTING FACTS

Early explorers Dominguez and Escalante originally named the river "El Rio de Santa Catalina de Siena", (The river of Holy Saint Catherine of Siena), Army Major and explorer John C. Fremont later re-named it the "Uinta". Since large numbers of wild strawberries are found throughout the valley, early settlers later changed its name to the "Strawberry River".

Prior to the popularization of motor vehicles, fishing/hunting trips to Strawberry Valley from surrounding counties normally took two days by horse-drawn wagon.

Travelers from Utah county often stayed the night in Wanroades canyon (about halfway up Diamond Fork canyon) at the camp of Chief Wanroades, where they were welcome to graze their horses and use the cooking fires.



UNKNOWN CHIEF WANROADES HYRUM ARGYLE TIE DEDRICKSON CHARLIE HANKS UNKNOWN

Argyle hunting party at Chief Wanroades camp (ca. 1905)

HYRUM ARGYLE is my
GREAT-GRANDFATHER.

They used handmade wooden boats for fishing, and for trolling would take turns rowing while others fished. They used handmade lures called "Strawberry Wobblers"

Hunting was held off until fall when the temperatures were cool enough to allow for the meat to be transported without spoiling. The animals were skinned, cooled out, wrapped in cloths, then placed in the bottom of the wagons for the journey home.

If the weather was unusually warm, they would soak the meat in salt water for a few hours and then lightly smoke it in crude portable smokehouses to "partially cure" it, to help prevent it from spoiling.

Since the wildlife they harvested was an important part of their sustenance, it was always properly preserved and nothing was ever wasted.

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In the early 1900's, catching a limit of fish and shooting a limit of ducks, or harvesting an elk, deer, or even a bear, in one day, was not uncommon.



Fishing/hunting trip to Strawberry Valley in 1909, Hyrum Argyle of Spanish Fork - on right, his son Matt - on left, the man in the center is Tie Dedrickson of Spanish Fork.

Del V. Argyle of Lake Shore, (son of Hyrum Argyle, depicted in photo above), suffered a fatal heart attack while hunting sage hens on Haws Point on September 19, 1953. The family placed an inscribed monument in his memory at the place where he died. The monument was moved to a higher location prior to enlargement of the reservoir, and is now only accessible by boat, (or a long difficult hike from the Haws Point road).



DEL ARGYLE - ca. 1952



IN MEMORY OF
DEL V ARGYLE
WHOSE TIRED HEART GAVE
OUT ON THIS SPOT
SEPT 19 1953
AT 6:15 AM

Since the valley was used for summer grazing by ranchers from both Duchesne and Utah counties, the fall roundup and cattle separation task was very labor intensive. A rancher from Utah County, Dave C., recognized that if a fence were built midway across the valley, it would keep the two cattle herds separate and make the roundup much easier. In the early 1900s, he and two of his sons began building the fence. When about halfway completed, a rancher from Duchesne county, Bill N., and several of his cowhands rode up and asked what was going on, when Dave explained what they were doing, Bill told him that he had to go back to his ranch but would return in about a month, and if the fence was still standing, he was going to shoot him. Knowing Bill's reputation for being a man of his word, Dave and his sons began dismantling the fence and discarded the wire into a large pile on the south end of the valley, it remained there until it was removed by work crews in 1980 prior to enlargement of the reservoir.



Remains of Dave's 1900 era log cabin in Steeper creek - 1989

Earlier on, successful fishing methods and effective lures and baits were guarded secrets. One would never get a straight answer when inquiring as to what one fisherman or another was using when they caught fish. It was also a waste of time to look at what lure was tied on their lines, because it was common practice to change lures to one which didn't produce before heading in. The old timers used to say, "If a fisherman tells you that he either used a yellow teaser or a marshmallow and worm, you can bet these are two things that he didn't use".

On October 1, 1918, there were 15 boats registered on the reservoir, by the end of 1921, fisherman had registered 51 boats.

In the 50s, there were an abundant number of prairie dogs, (potguts), in and around the old fishing camps. Youngsters became very adept at catching and branding them with small "branding irons" made of wire bent into one of their initials. By summers end, most of the population were sporting these brands, (many of them were branded on both sides).

The Reclamation leased areas around the reservoir to ranchers, which brought in \$10,000 per year before the leases were transferred to the Strawberry Water Users Association. Under the Water Users Association, grazing leases provided a significant portion of the revenue necessary for repayment of the construction costs. In 1922 a study was conducted which revealed that the land in Strawberry Valley supported 1850 horses, 20 mules, 6760 cattle, 13,000 sheep, 17,600 fowl, 1330 hogs, and 274 beehives. In 1922 grazing revenues netted a profit of \$17,274.

Daniels canyon played an important role in the development of Strawberry valley, it was named after Aaron Daniels, an early pioneer who began taming the wilderness in 1858. The road through the canyon was a major artery used to transport workers and equipment to construction sites. Daniels Summit Lodge was constructed in the mid-1800s, and in 1876, changed ownership as the result of a poker game, it was then converted into a boarding house where people could eat a meal and sleep on the floor for 50 cents. After switching owners several times, in 1925 a 15-room boarding house was built to accommodate travelers on the stagecoach line. In 1963, the building burned and sat vacant for 20 years. The Hill family purchased the land in 1983, and has since developed it into what it is today.

Old timer's landmarks

Actual locations

- "The Ditch" - The lateral that was dredged from the river bottom to the entrance of the diversion tunnel.
- "Charlie Chaplains" - The bay on the southwest edge of East Portal bay.

- "The Willows" - The northwest edge of Bryans Fork bay.
- "The Red Ledges" - The bank directly below what is now loop "E" of the Strawberry Bay campground.
- "The River" - The area at the mouth, and just north, of Mud Creek bay, where the old river channel is located.
- "The Springs" - An area west of the knolls where some large springs were flowing into the river prior to construction of the dam.
- "The Two Trees" - An area north of Haws Point, where there was once two trees on the bank, about 100 feet apart.
- "The Channel" - The area directly in front of the Indian creek spillway, where the old creek bed is located.

Notables of yesteryear

- Wilbur P. Shippee: Chief electrical engineer who oversaw operations of the upper and lower Spanish Fork power plants.
- Charlie Madsen: Operated the old Camp Strawberry fishing camp which was located across the bay south of the Strawberry Bay Marina, and was known as "Charlie's".
- Frank Madsen: Operated the fishing camp which was located on the South end of the reservoir next to the spillway, and was known as "Frank's".
- Doug Phillips: Purchased Frank Madsen's fishing camp in 1976 and renamed it "Phillips Boat Camp"
- Fred Clark: Operated the fishing camp near the mouth of Mud Creek bay, and was known as "Clarks".
- Charlie Woodbury: Operated the fishing camp near the mouth of Trout Creek bay, and was known as "Charlie's Trout Creek"

hur Hope: Lived all summer in his cabin at the old Camp Strawberry, and was regarded as the most renowned Strawberry fisherman of his time. Anyone fortunate enough to be invited to fish with him was obligated to take an oath of secrecy regarding his fishing methods.

nell Argyle: Cattle range operator and rider for the Strawberry Water User's Association, he was also a fishing guide at the old Camp Strawberry. (His father, Del Argyle, and grandfather, Hyrum Argyle, are both mentioned herein).

Busse: Owned and operated Bill's cafe which was located at the Strawberry turnoff on highway 40.

len Peay: Fish and Wildlife officer, "Game Warden", who enforced fishing and hunting regulations throughout Strawberry valley for many years.

um Argyle: Built one of the first cabins on the reservoir at the Madsen brothers' fishing camp. In 1918 he was appointed as a Game Warden and also acted as the camp fishing guide, in all the years he served as a warden he made only one arrest, everyone knew that a warning from Hy Argyle was all that was needed. His wife, Aurelia, cooked and served meals in the café.



Hyrum Argyles' cabin at the Madsen brothers' fishing camp, (old camp Strawberry) - 1915

Matt Argyle:

Worked on the Strawberry Valley construction project from the beginning. His many assigned tasks included: Tunnel excavation foreman, rock crusher operator, and explosives handler/blaster.



Matt Argyle's family in Strawberry Valley - 1920

THESE ARE MY GRANDPARENTS.
THE YOUNG GIRL HOLDING
THE DOLL IS MY MOTHER,
4 YEARS OLD.

THE STRAWBERRY WOBBLER

The Strawberry Wobbler was an indispensable tackle box item from its conception through the 1960's. Younger anglers may not know of this famous old fishing lure, but old-time fishermen recollect many fond memories of the Wobbler's mystical powers. Reputed to have been developed by Charlie Madsen, one of Strawberry's first guides and fishing camp owners, the wobbler appears as a nondescript, flattened "S" curved spoon that sported a variety of different color schemes and patterns.



A flat pre-cut soft brass blank is placed into the die which forms the lure into its classic "S" curve with pressure.

An employee of the Madsen's, Shorty Goodel, would make the lures while guiding clients in his boat. Using a block of wood that was once part of an old fence post, he carved out a shallow round indentation which he used as a crude die. He would gently pound out the general shape of the lure from pre-cut, soft brass disks. Charlie's wobbler remained a guarded secret from its conception until Brigham Mitchell began to manufacture them in the early 1950's. He designed a press capable of copying the shape of a wobbler he discovered inside a trout that he had caught. He secured a patent for the lure and he and his family produced and sold them through local tackle shops for a number of years.

Many resident fishermen fabricated dies that copied the lures' configuration and produced them for their own use. After a day's fishing, several of them would gather in one or another's cabin and compare notes, the color patterns that were successful in catching fish that day were copied onto other lures for the next day's fishing. They all had lure paint in their tackle boxes, and would experiment with different color patterns while out on the lake trolling.



Original Strawberry Wobblers handmade by Carlos Gardner of Spanish Fork 1950

Reproductions of the original Strawberry Wobblers are available at some tackle shops. Old-timers suggest using lead core line and trolling very slow, 4 or 5 colors deep and perhaps tipped with a worm or minnow.

MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

The Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD) is the operating agency for the enlarged Strawberry Reservoir.

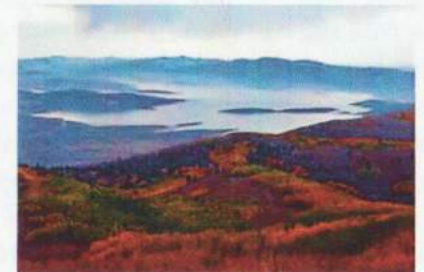
The US Forest Service (USFS) is the management agency for the valley.

The Utah Division of Natural Resources (DNR) is the conservation management agency for land, minerals, and wildlife.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is the fish and wildlife management agency.

IN CONCLUSION

There are many battles currently being waged, IE: Quagga and Zebra mussel infestation possibilities, whirling disease, ground and water pollutants, etc. Since Strawberry Valley belongs to all of us, we have the obligation of helping to ensure that its delicate ecological balances are not compromised. It is vitally important that all visitors and those who utilize its vast resources be reminded of the laws and regulations that are in place for this purpose.



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