

Steelhead Fishing California Rivers

by John Nordstrand • October 19, 2012 •

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Eureka-area steelhead, like this 11-pound hen from the Eel River, take a variety of flies, including Brindle Bugs and Comets. Wes Powell photo.

“Eureka!” The word was supposedly first exclaimed by the Greek mathematician Archimedes when he discovered a way to determine the purity of gold by applying the principle of specific gravity. Many steelhead fishermen have uttered the same word upon entering California’s city of Eureka, an alluring coastal community filled with antique stores, free-spirited Humboldt State University students, redwood loggers, and commercial fishermen. For feverish anglers, Eureka means winsome motels and cafes manned by friendly locals who are ready to welcome fly fishers looking for the best steelhead fishing in the state.

Just 90 miles south of the Oregon border and 275 miles north of San Francisco, this seaside city is the main hub for fall and winter fishing on the famed steelhead and salmon waters of California’s Six Rivers National Forest. The six rivers include the Smith, Klamath, Trinity, Mad, Eel, and Van Duzen. They flow out of the Coast Range, a range of scabrous mountains covered with Douglas fir, pine, hemlock, and alder, to a coast decorated with crags, rough surf, tidal lagoons, and steelhead rivers bordered by giant redwoods.

The best time to fish these rivers is from January through March, after a winter freshet, when the rivers are dropping and clearing. But before you make a long drive to the area, call the California Department of Fish and Game’s Low-flow Information Line, (707) 442-4502, for river closures due to low flows. Also, because of logging in the area, the rivers can blow out quickly after a storm, so you should check with a local fly shop before traveling.

Read more: <http://www.flyfisherman.com/2012/10/19/steelhead-fishing-california-rivers/#ixzz2l4IG0Dmn>