

Kokanee putting on a show at Taylor Creek



Kokanee salmon are filling the channel of Taylor Creek.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – They're baaaacccckkkk – the Kokanee salmon that is.

With more water in Taylor Creek than in recent falls, the fish are spawning in good numbers this year. While it's likely the run has not peaked, the die-off is already evident.



A platform separates people from wildlife.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

On Friday a crawdad was gnawing away on a submerged carcass, with his friend crawling slowly to join in the feast.

For people, it's really a feast for the eyes. These non-native fish to Lake Tahoe are a colorful spectacle as they make their way from the lake up Taylor Creek. The whole point is for the females to lay eggs – from 200 to 1,800 per fish – and the males to fertilize them. Both then die. Their offspring are born in the spring and then make their way to the lake.

It is smell that brings them back to Taylor Creek – their birthplace.



A duck on Oct. 6 successfully goes fishing for Kokanee at Taylor Creek. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The female and male's scales turn red as they spawn. The males' jaws become hooked.

New this year along the Rainbow Trail at Taylor Creek Visitors Center is a viewing platform that in large part was paid for by the Tahoe Fund. It had to be built after too many people thought it was a good idea to take selfies with bears in the background.

For some reason people treated this wild, natural event like it was some controlled scene at Disneyland. Their behavior was putting their lives at risk and potentially the bear's.



Under water a crawdad digs at the
flesh of a decaying Kokanee.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

The wood deck doesn't take away from seeing this annual ritual. It just means the creek is no longer accessible. In a wet year like this, it actually makes it less muddy and gives a wider area to see things.

What some people were treated to on Oct. 6 were ducks racing up and down a small stretch of the creek, then diving, swimming a ways underwater all in the quest to dine on Kokanee. It was working. A blue heron was also spotted.

This weekend is the annual Fall Fish Festival at the visitors center off Highway 89 on the South Shore. It is from 10am-4pm Saturday and Sunday. The free event gives people a chance to learn about all the fish species in Lake Tahoe.