



TECH BULLETIN

COLORADO

TAYLOR RESERVOIR

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.

By Ed Marsh

In the Taylor Park country of central Colorado, a set of natural circumstances has created what all anglers dream of. Big water! Deep water! Pure, cold water! A food chain that assures the growth of the many trophy fish found in this aquatic paradise. Huge Mackinaws, giant northern pike, hefty rainbows and cutthroats, heavy browns and school after school of kokanee salmon. All this in a single body of water. Taylor Reservoir. This beautiful, crystal-clear mountain lake has it all.

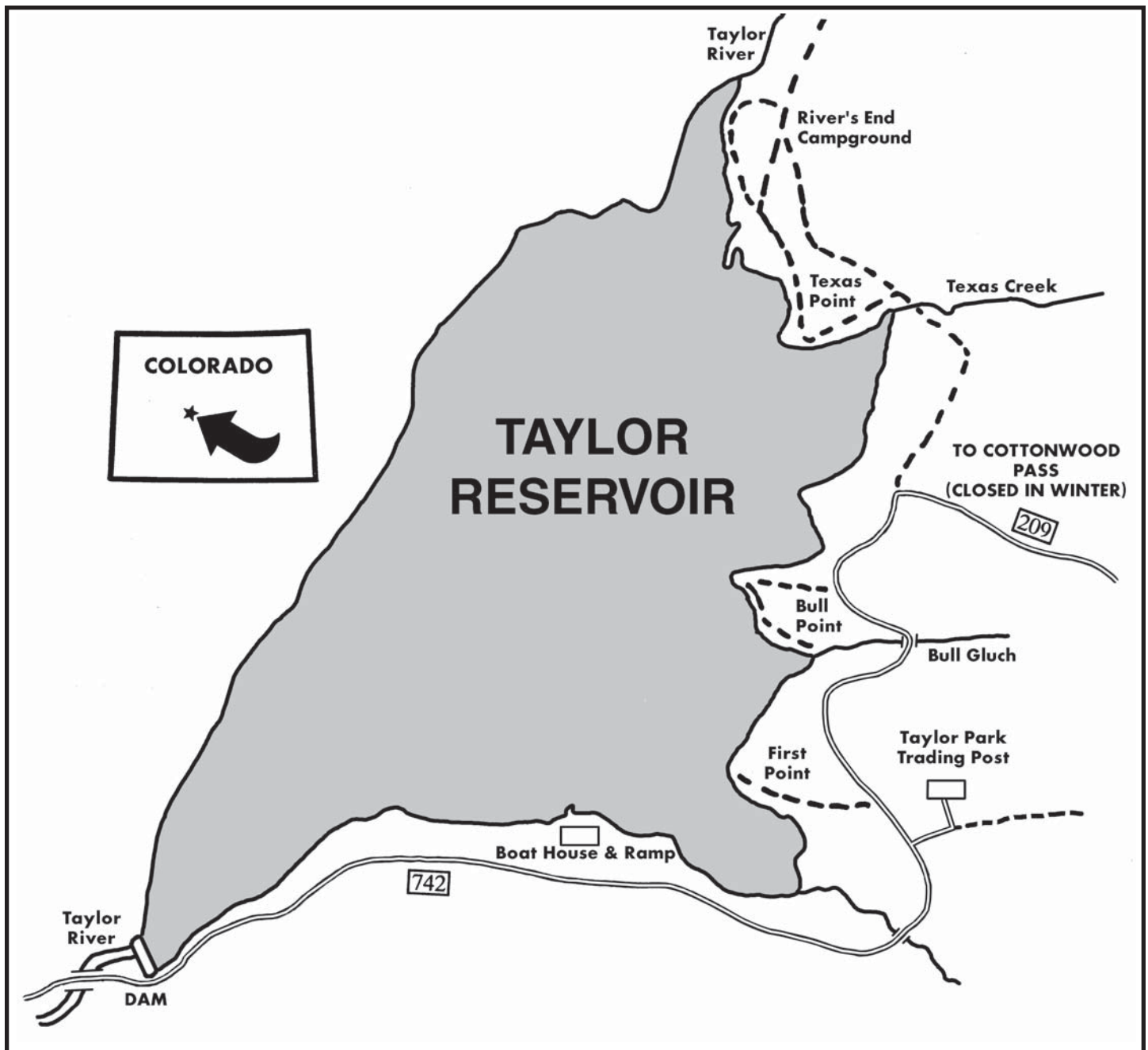
Located 44 miles north of the town of Gunnison and 32 miles west of Buena Vista, this big deep lake that covers 2,033 acres when full, offers year round fishing for all



Ed Marsh with Taylor Reservoir pike caught on a Luhr Jensen Power Minnow™ from a BOAT!

the species named. Mackinaws of well over 30 pounds are caught annually. Twenty-pound-plus northern pike are landed here although 8 to 12 pounders are more common. While most rainbows and cutthroats are pan-sized, there are enough older relations of these popular game fish to provide real trophies. It's probably easier to catch a trophy brown of 10 pounds or larger than a rainbow or "cutt" of this size but the potential for big fish of any species is always a possibility in Taylor.

While the kokanee here don't reach the large size of kokes found in other Colorado waters, their numbers make up for size and besides supplying anglers with great sport and fine eating, also provide a high protein diet for the bigger Macs, pike and browns,



which in turn ensures that these predators have the potential for putting on pounds and inches.

TROUT

Rainbow are the most numerous of the three trout species found in the Taylor Reservoir because there is a naturally reproducing population of wild rainbows plus the lake is heavily stocked with hatchery fish. Snake River cutthroats are also stocked and grow rapidly in the food-rich environment so that "cutts" to 18 and 20 inches are not unusual. Browns, though not stocked, hold their own through natural reproduction. Also, browns grow to much larger sizes than the other trout species.

Various techniques work well in this lake. Casting and retrieving from shore with spoons, drifting and casting spoons from a boat, jigging spoons such as the *Krocodile*[®], *Super Duper*[®] or *Crippled Herring*[®] from a boat and, of course, trolling . . . all produce trout. Trailing a lure or a nightcrawler 12 to 30 inches behind a *Cowbell*[®], *Ford Fender*[®] or *Dave Davis*[®] lake troll is a favorite technique that can be quite deadly. In fact, it's the only setup that many trollers will use. Casting a crankbait such as the *Power Minnow*[™] in either the 3 3/8- or 4 1/2-in. size in *Fire Tiger* finish is a personal favorite of mine.

KOKANEE SALMON

Probably the majority of kokanee caught in the Taylor Reservoir come from trolling, although throwing spoons such as the Super Duper, *Needlefish*[®] or *Kokanee King*[™] will certainly account for kokes when they are schooling within casting distance of shore.

Schools of these landlocked little red salmon will be found from 10 to 60 or 70 feet deep, in or just below the thermocline and especially where plankton, their primary diet, is located.

A fish finder is a must for trolling so you can put your lure at the depth the fish are. Blind trolling without a locator is usually a waste of time because schools vary their depth during the day.

More and more trollers are using downriggers but a *Dipsy Diver*[®] or *Pink Lady*[®] can be equally effective and a lot less expensive way to get down where they are. Follow the directions for rigging these trolling aids, then try different lengths of line until fish are caught. Just remember, the more line out, the deeper the diver runs. Use colored waterproof, felt-tip markers to indicate the length of line being trolled. For example, use a black mark every 10 feet for 50 feet; then red every 10 feet to 100 feet. Repeat the sequence until the desired length of line is reached.

Luhr Jensen's *Krocodile* in various weights and colors (try the *Chrome/Fire Side Stripe*) is easily one of the favorites, especially through the ice. The Super Duper is right behind it in popularity and is quite deadly for kokanee when using the long-line trolling technique. Use a lure on 4- to 8-lb. test mono and let 200 or 300 feet out and allow the lure to work naturally.

Kokanee Kings and Crippled Herring are also proven killers. The Needlefish in smaller sizes and various colors can produce on days when the fish are being especially selective.

Suggested lake trolls for kokes include the Cowbell, Ford Fender or the Dave Davis

in various sizes and finishes. Also included are the *Abe & Al*[®] flasher, the 4/0 *Jensen Dodger*[™], *Jeweled Bead*[™] *Kokanee Troll* and the *Jack-O-Diamonds*[™]. Many trollers use a rubber snubber at the tail of the troll in front of the leader to the lure because kokes have tender mouths and the snubber reduces the chance of hooks tearing free on the strike.

MACKINAW

These giants are the primary reason many anglers come to Taylor Reservoir. Although most Macs are caught from boats, either by deep-trolling or jigging in 60 to 80 foot deep water, right after ice out or just before the lake freezes over for the winter, the Mackinaw fishing from shore can be incredible. Casting lures such as *Krocodiles*, *Crippled Herring* and especially the #6 *Power Minnow* in *Fire Tiger* finish or the *Javelin*[™] in 5 3/4-in. *Fire Tiger* can mean hooking some real trophies.

You can use lead core line or a *Pink Lady* or a smaller *Deep Six*[®] diver to get down 60 or 70 feet where the big ones are when trolling.

NORTHERN PIKE

The northern pike in Taylor Reservoir were once despised by many anglers who simply didn't appreciate this incredible game fish. Fortunately, that has changed and now, many anglers travel to Taylor to fish for pike, with trout their secondary choice!

Wading the shallows from early June 'til early August and casting 3 3/8- or 4 1/2-in. *Suspending Power Minnows*[™], once again in *Fire Tiger* finish can bring unbelievable results. It actually scary to be retrieving a *Suspending Power Minnow* and watching a pike come up behind it. STOP!!! The pike will usually swim right up to the lure and just sit there. Give it about 10 seconds, then give a hard yank causing the plug to appear to be escaping. Almost always that pike will engulf the lure, like it was starved!

Some pike fishing experts feel that a new state record northern pike lurks in the depths of Taylor with means one of over 43.5 inches and more than 30.6 pounds. For sure, the potential is there for a record breaker. Other techniques include trolling with *Kwikfish*[®] or *Hot Lips Express*[®] plugs in the 10 to 20 foot depths, drifting in a boat and casting toward the shallow in the various bays around the lake with various crankbaits.

A good spoon to try is a *Krocodile*. Surface lures such as the *P.J. Pop*[™], *Nip-I-Diddee*[®], *Jerk 'n Sam*[™] or *Woodchopper*[®] can entice savage, spectacular strikes that only a northern can produce.

ICE FISHING

There is some serious ice fishing done on this lake in the winter and that's when it's possible to haul a giant Mackinaw through a hole in the ice. The only problem is that sometimes the Mac is too large to get through the 10-in. maximum Colorado-legal ice fishing hole! Jigging spoons such as the *Krocodile* or *Crippled Herring* in larger sizes and sweetened with a strip of sucker meat are a favorite means of catching Macs. Northern pike will also hit these lures and downsizing to smaller spoons will produce trout and kokanee salmon. The Super Duper is especially good when jigging for kokes.

A WORD TO THE WISE

Taylor Park can be dangerous in the winter for the careless or unprepared angler. Temperatures of 35 to 40 degrees below zero are not unusual and the snow can get very deep making travel difficult if not impossible, either in a vehicle or on foot. Many use snowmobiles here which is an excellent idea. Fierce winds can drift snow over roads and trails in very short order so ALWAYS be aware of the weather. Take the necessary precautions for travel and dress accordingly.

ACCOMMODATIONS/FACILITIES

The Taylor Park Trading Post is a family-run operation that has been in existence for many years and caters to the outdoor minded. A well stocked grocery, with a good selection of tackle plus fishing report free for the asking, plus gas, ice and about anything you might need are available. Its open seven days a week except in the winter.

There are several very comfortable cabins to rent for those who really don't want to rough it. Advance reservations for the cabins are strongly recommended as many repeat customers come back year after year. Owners Bruce and Roy Cranor are both avid and expert anglers and will gladly share their knowledge with you. The mailing address is Taylor Park Trading Post, P.O. Box 545, Almont, CO 81210 or call 970-641-2555.

There is also a boat ramp and store with boat rentals, ice, fishing tackle and fuel located on the south shore. The Taylor Park Boat House can be reached by calling 970-641-2922. Several primitive Forest Service campgrounds are available with River's End Campground being the most popular. There is a fee for overnight camping at all of them.

Because fishing regulations keep changing, get a copy of the current Colorado Fishing Regulations, available at all licensing agencies and read them carefully and thoroughly.

