



TECH BULLETIN

COLORADO

PUEBLO RESERVOIR

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

By ED MARSH

Pueblo Reservoir, also known as Lake Pueblo, was built on the Arkansas River as a flood control and irrigation project by the Bureau of Reclamation. Located to the west of the city of Pueblo, this 11-mile-long body of water has 60 miles of shoreline when full and is an angler's paradise. A word of caution, though, since the 9/11 terrorist attack, no one is allowed within 100 feet of the dam, which includes on foot or with a boat, so there is NO FISHING off the dam or even next to it, with a boat. It is not known how long this restriction will be in effect. Signs are posted explaining the prohibitions.

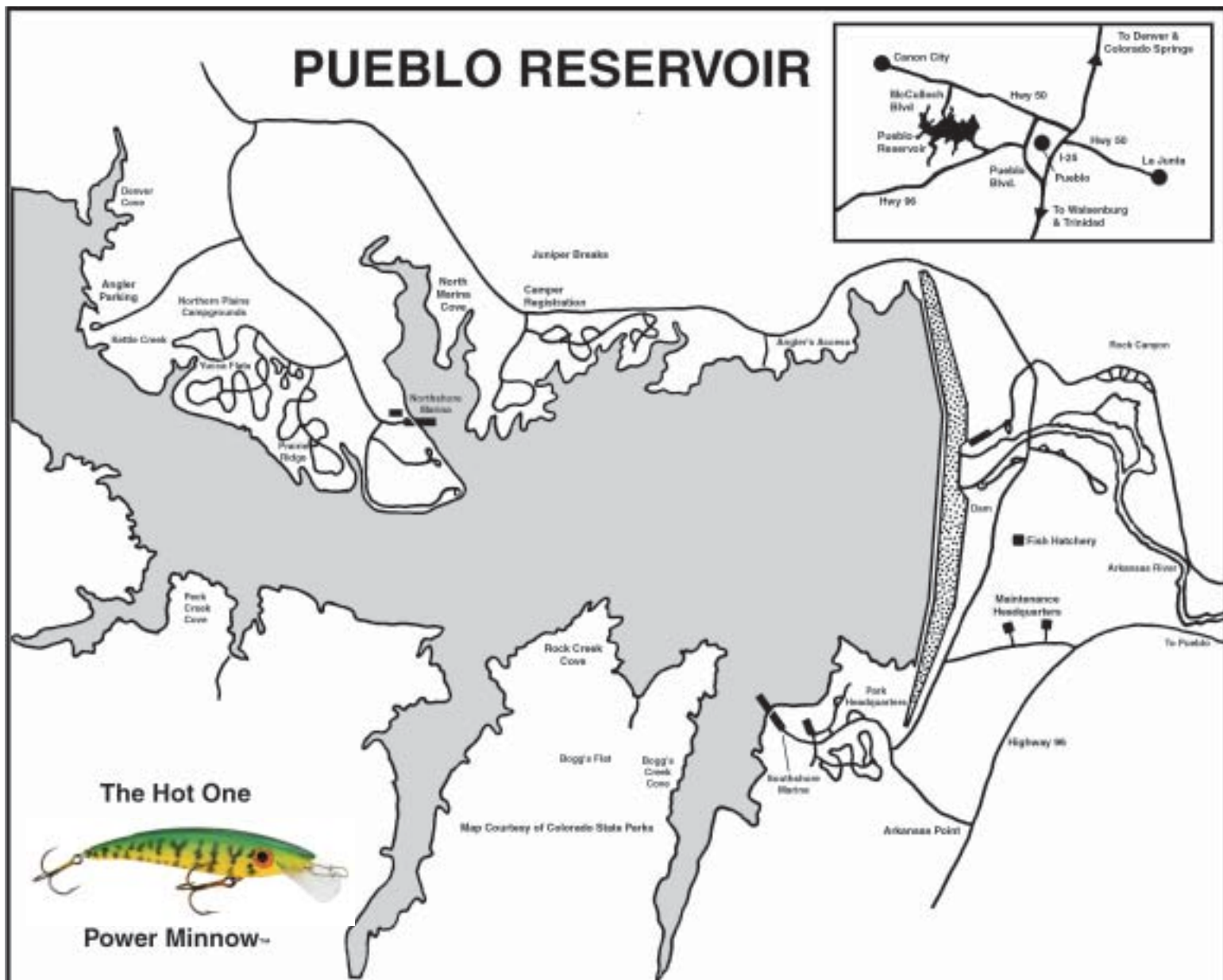
The diversity of the species of game fish is what makes this popular lake so appealing. Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted bass and walleye have minimum length



Ed Marsh with Pueblo walleye caught on a Fire Tiger Lühr Jensen Speed Trap™

limits but there has been talk of changing these limits so be sure to read the fishing regulations. There are also wipers to over 20 lbs., crappie, bluegill, yellow perch, channel catfish, rainbows and browns. This mixed bag of gamefish attracts anglers from all over Colorado.

The food chain is bountiful, with shad leading the list, followed by suckers, shiner minnows, crawdads and insects of all kinds which feed the smaller fish, including baby game fish, which in turn are preyed on by the larger predators. Many fishing tournaments are held here annually for black bass, walleye, or wipers and the competition can be fierce. I have caught fish every month of the year from Pueblo, but of course some months are better than others. January and February are prime months for big rainbows that cruise the many bays and





coves. March, April and May are outstanding months for all kinds of black bass, plus crappie hit well during this period. After the walleye are through spawning in April, they head in to the shallows to feed and the fishing there can be spectacular through May and June. Also starting in May and into June, the wipers start hitting as though starved and surface action can be quite good. However, as with all fishing, some days it's incredible while on other days the lake seems fished out.

During July and August the weather can be extremely hot and the bugs that bite H-U-N-G-R-Y! Also afternoon thunderstorms can be a dangerous nuisance. Because of the hot weather, this is when knowledgeable anglers fish at night during the dark of the moon, casting large crankbaits along rocky cliffs and even working the shallow flats with shallow running crankbaits, for large catfish and walleye. In September the lake starts cooling and the fishing gets HOT, especially for the larger wipers, ON THE SURFACE! Bass, crappie, catfish, walleye and trout go on a feeding spree, preparing for the lean winter months.

The wiper action lasts into November, including some surface action. November is when I've caught all my biggest walleye from here. By December, trout and walleye, along with some bass, are still hitting. This brings it back full circle to January and the Pueblo regulars, including me, start all over again!

BLACK BASS

Take your pick! Shore anglers walking the banks along the many bays and coves; boaters casting to the shoreline or working structure; in deep water . . . it all works! For the bank anglers, top water plugs such as the *Bass-Oreno®*, *Wood-chopper®* or *Dalton Special®*; crankbaits like the *Speed Trap™*, *Brush Baby®* or *Floating Power Minnow™* (one of my favorites!) it doesn't matter, these will all catch bass and other game fish as well.

Any of this hardware will also produce for boaters plugging the shorelines. Add some *Sugar Shads®* or *Crippled Herring®* for vertical jigging or working dropoffs and cliffs in deeper water, and sore arms from fighting fish are not unusual. In fact, I've caught and released over a hundred bass in a single day of fishing Pueblo Reservoir and I've had a number of days like that . . . including the sore arm!

WALLEYE

This very popular gamefish, which can reach weights of over 14 pounds in this lake, can be caught with a variety of lures. Shallow running crankbaits such as a Speed Trap, Floating Power Minnow or Brush

Baby will work well in May and June when the wallies prowling the shallows hunting food.

When the marble eyes move to deeper water, trolling a *Hot Lips Express®* or *Power Dive® Minnow* will get you down to where they are suspending. Vertical jigging in 60 to 70 feet of water with heavier models of *Krocodiles®*, *Cast Champs®* or Crippled Herring, especially with *Silver/Silver Prism-Lite®* tape, is a proven method of catching walleyes. During July and August, the two hottest months at Pueblo, casting crankbaits such as the Speed Trap, Brush Baby or *Suspending Power Minnow™* can produce fish in the over-10-lb. class but it must be done at night during the dark of the moon. At this time, walleye will move into fairly shallow water to feed.

WIPERS

This white bass/striped bass hybrid is a very popular gamefish in Colorado, especially in Pueblo Reservoir where the lake record is over 20 lbs, caught on a silver spoon. I've found the best fishing for wipers to be in May and June and again from late August to early November. Casting large Krocodiles, Cast Champs or Crippled Herring at least 1/2-oz. and larger, is one of my favorite techniques for catching large wipers, either from shore or boat. Various crankbaits like the larger size Speed Traps, Brush Babys and Sugar Shads are also quite effective, again either from shore or boat. Trolling deep runners such as a Hot Lips Express or Power Dive Minnow (my favorite) in large sizes will put the lure below the schools of 3- to 5-lb. wipers, down to where the giants are.

Starting in late August, the wipers will push baby shad to the surface, creating sheer pandemonium. This is the time to go to surface plugs and Luhr Jensen has some KILLERS! Size is important because the baby shad are only 2 to 3 inches long and very silvery in color so its important to use lures with plenty of white or silver. The *Johnny Rattler™* is a new plug that should be absolutely deadly. Try the *Pearl, "Petey", Silver Speckle* and *Silver/Black Back Stripe & Speck*.

My favorite Luhr Jensen poppers are the *P.J. Pop™* (3/16-oz) and in *Blue Back/Silver Shad* and the *Bone/Orange Throat* plus the *Dalton Special®* (1/3-oz.) in the *Silver Flash* or *Silver Foil Shad*. Notice my selections have a lot of white and/or silver. When the wipers are in a real feeding frenzy, then size no longer matters and they will smash ANYTHING making a disturbance on the water.

CATFISH

Giant cats, to over 25 pounds, can be caught off rocky cliffs, in deep water, using

the same lures and during the same July and August time frame as the big walleyes. In fact, when a big fish is hooked, sometimes the angler doesn't know what he has until it's in the net. Trollers, dragging deep-running crankbaits, also pick up an occasional catfish.

TROUT

Some may claim that Pueblo is not a good trout lake. However, I've caught far too many big trout, to over 6 lbs., to believe that! It's all in where you fish and I find that the bays and coves, in from 4 to 15 feet of water, are where most of the trout are. This lake is heavily stocked with trout and with the abundance of food, they grow rapidly.

One of my favorite lures is a Krocodile in *Chrome, Hammered Chrome* and *Chrome/Silver Prism-Lite®* and in 1/6-, 3/16- and 1/4-oz. sizes. Because the larger trout feed heavily on baby shad, the silvery, flashy look is deadly. Trolling with a *Ford Fender®* or *Cowbells®* with a *Needle-fish®* or nightcrawler trailing the flashers is a popular and productive way of boating trout.

ACCOMMODATIONS/FACILITIES

Lake Pueblo State Park, 640 Pueblo Reservoir Road, Pueblo, CO 81005, 719-561-9320, is an extremely popular recreation area, especially for fishing and camping. Clean, comfortable campsites blend in with the environment, making for a relaxed atmosphere. Call the park for information on what campgrounds are open during summer and winter. A daily or annual parks pass is required for entrance to the park area and there is a fee for camping. The west end of Pueblo Reservoir is managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and no pass is required for entrance. No camping is allowed, but the fishing and hunting are choice.

There are two marinas on Lake Pueblo, the *South Shore Marina*, 719-564-1043 and the *North Shore Marina*, 719-547-3880. Both have the usual supplies that boaters, anglers and campers need.

T & M Sporting Goods, 2023 Lakeview Ave., Pueblo, 719-564-0790, carries a complete line of tackle, especially Luhr Jensen trolling flashers and the folks there are really friendly and knowledgeable.

Hunter's Cove Outdoor Gear, 190 W. Palmer Lake, next to McCulloch Blvd., in Pueblo West, 719-647-0550, has a full line of fishing tackle, including many Luhr Jensen products. Owner Kurt Leach and his crew are always willing to give current fishing reports and I know the reports are accurate because these guys are out FISHING!