

Loch Lomond opens peacefully

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SANTA CRUZ — Unlike last year's fishing frenzy, opening day at Loch Lomond Monday was peaceful and placid.

"We were just amazed to see no one was here. I think after last year everyone was so worried it would be crowded they just stayed away," said Summit-area resident James DeLauder, who sat on the sunny bank of the lake, casting his lines.

Ranger Bill Wolcott said 95 carloads of anglers and seven more hikers visited the lake Monday. Last year, when the mountain reservoir opened after a five-year closure brought on by years of drought, nearly 1,000 people were fishing by 8 a.m., and by the end of the day more than 400 carloads of anglers had entered the park along with 700 walk-ins.

This year, the heavy winter rains made it possible to open the lake a month earlier than in 1992, and water officials say they expect it to remain open throughout the summer.

Despite the high water line, Wolcott said fishing was bleak Monday.

"There were a few bass brought out, and the trout were few and far between," he said.

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Osprey at left was among those who caught fish Monday.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Allen Searson of Ben Lomond, the first on the lake Monday morning, packs up after catching two trout.

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The state Department of Fish and Game is expected to stock the lake with trout later this month.

Neighbors of the lake, who battled huge crowds on their quiet streets last year, were pleased with Monday's quiet turnout.

"It really wasn't bad at all," said Denise Haney. "There were a couple of trucks with boats, but it was real quiet and real orderly."

City officials had done their part to make things work better this year. New signs were posted pointing the way to the lake, and warning visitors to not park or even stand near private driveways.

Haney said the signs made a big difference.

"I might even have some flowers along the fence this year, because if they're not allowed to stand, they're definitely not allowed to relieve themselves,"

she said. "Last year those fishermen did my flowers in."

Down the road at the lake, a mellow group of anglers were reeling in the occasional bass and trout and catching the rays.

DeLauder said fish were just an added bonus, and that he came out to enjoy the sun.

"I knew we could catch that," he said.

His friend Bruce Prather of Scotts Valley reeled in a 14-inch bass and then threw it back, respecting the wishes of the Santa Cruz bass club which posted signs asking people to voluntarily "catch and release" in order to protect Loch Lomond's bass population.

"If I caught a seven-pound bass I'd probably keep it," said Prather, whose reel never stopped spinning as he talked about the fishing. "Somewhere out there, there's a state record

bass swimming around," he added.

Cols. Mike Smith and Galen Jackman from Fort Ord sleepily watched Prather fish for a while. They were the third carload to enter the park, arriving at 5:30 a.m., and by 2 p.m. the fishless soldiers were ready to go home.

"I was the only guy he could get to go fishing, because people say he's a jinx," joked Jackman.

As if to rub it in, an osprey flew by dangling its own small fish.

"Not true, not true!" protested Smith, "but if you put this in the paper, could you say I caught about 16? Fishermen will understand that I didn't really, but those stories keep them coming out here."

Loch Lomond is open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. Admission is \$4 per car or \$1 to walk in. For more information, call (408) 335-7424.