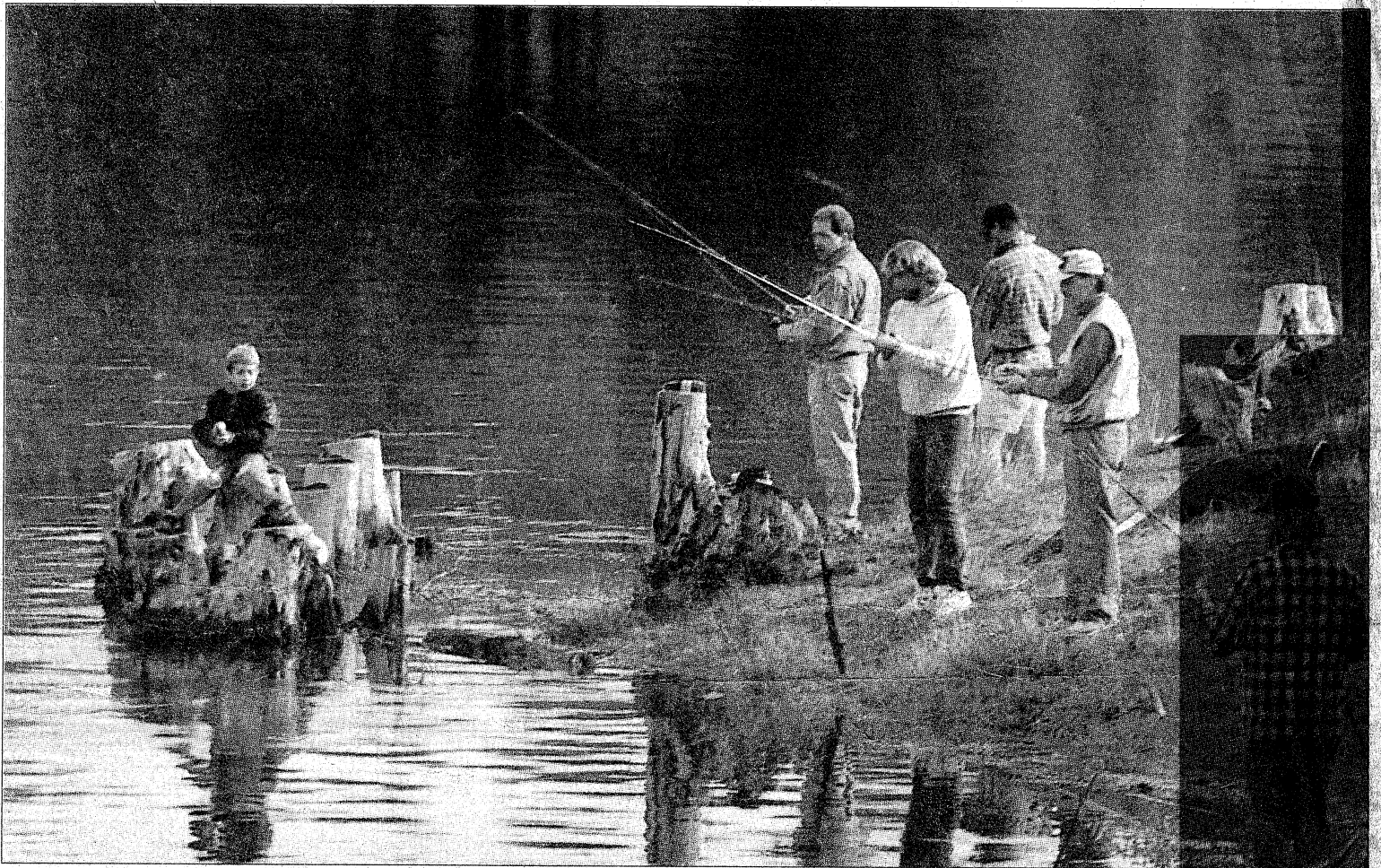


A cast of thousands

Opening day at Santa Cruz Mountains lake leaves many high, dry



LEN LAHMAN — MERCURY NEWS

Fishing from the shore of Loch Lomond Reservoir on Wednesday was crowded, but less hectic than the highway approaching the lake.

Hordes of anglers make Loch Lomond anything but bonny

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News Staff Writer

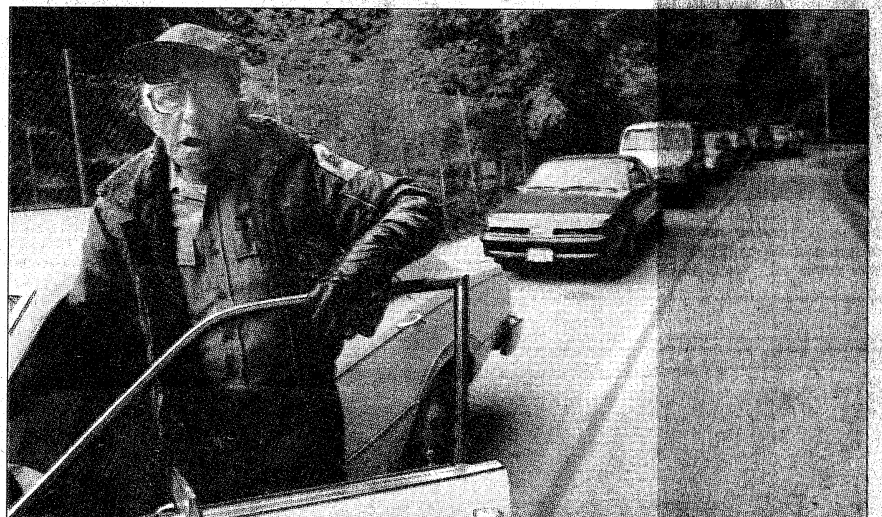
Thousands of fishing enthusiasts lured by dreams of trophy-sized fish descended Wednesday on Loch Lomond Reservoir for the first opening day in four years, clogging narrow roads through the Santa Cruz Mountains in a pre-dawn convoy of four-wheel drive vehicles, tackle boxes and coolers of beer.

"This thing is the Woodstock of fishing," marveled Bill Huber of Watsonville.

Huber and his buddy, Dan Bowie of Brookdale, stayed up all night to get first crack at the reservoir, which had been closed because of the drought. According to police overwhelmed by the masses, so did 500 other anglers who drove from as far away as Oregon and Anaheim for the large-mouth bass and rainbow trout.

Bicyclists pedaled 15 miles from Santa Cruz, carrying fishing gear on their backs. Some people walked in the dark from Felton, five miles away. One man took a cab into the wilderness.

By early morning, 1,000 people had entered the



reservoir area — 10 times the weekday average from prior seasons.

Locals flooded police with complaints about traffic, noise and drinking, although the Santa Cruz County sheriff's office reported no arrests.

Rangers at the 3,200-acre preserve near Lompico said they anticipated crowds, but nothing like the hordes who began showing up Tuesday night for the 5 a.m. opening day. Loch Lomond always has been known as one of the best freshwater fishing spots in the Bay Area, and because no one had

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At 7:15 a.m., cars were lined up for two miles behind this Loch Lomond park worker who refused to give his name.