

Owens Valley Fish Hatchery Field Trip – Terry Mitchell (April 13, 2024)

As a child, my parents took me on lots of different field trips expanding my knowledge and love of many different subjects. One of my favorite places to visit was Fish Hatcheries. As a parent and grandparent, I made sure to continue with that legacy of sharing knowledge and experience by taking my kids and later grandkids up to the Owens Valley and visiting the Fish Hatcheries. Going to the fish hatchery, learning, viewing, and feeding the fish has always been an experience that brings a smile to my face, even as an adult.

Come with us on April 13, 2024 to the Owens Valley and visit the two operating fish hatcheries in the Owens Valley. We'll be visiting Fish Springs and Black Rock Fish Hatcheries.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) personnel will be available.

Our journey will start at the Maturango Museum and arrange carpools (if people want to carpool) and ultimately head north on 395 to the Owens Valley trying to stay together as much as possible without annoying others on the road. We'll stop at the Interagency Center just before Lone Pine to use the facilities and look around a bit (about 45 minutes). The Interagency Center has a lot of information and if you feel that you need more time to peruse, I encourage you to do that after we've completed our last stop at Black Rock Fish Hatchery and you are heading back to Ridgecrest where you'll travel at your own speed. The Interagency Center closes at 4:30pm, gates close at 4:15pm.

From the Interagency Center we'll again head north on 395 to Fish Springs Fish Hatchery. The plan is to go to our northern-most destination and then make the additional stop on our way south back towards Ridgecrest.

Fish Springs Fish Hatchery was originally constructed in 1952 and in 1972 the Hatchery was modernized to a system of concrete raceways where water is supplied by two groundwater wells. Constructed in 2009, the facility's hatchery building houses a total of twenty deep tanks. The building is primarily used to hatch out eyed eggs which are received from other facilities and rearing the resulting fry until they are large enough to be moved to the outdoor raceways (approximately 2 inches long). In the raceways you'll find fish grouped together by size. Fish Springs raises fish year-round and plants from April to October. Restroom facilities are available at Fish Springs.



From Fish Springs Hatchery we'll head south on 395 about 12 miles, making a stop at the Division Creek Caltrans Rest Area to eat lunch at the picnic area. Prior to leaving the rest area we'll use the bathroom facilities because there are not reliable facilities for public use at Black Rock Fish Hatchery. I guess they are always having issues with the plumbing. When we leave the Division Creek Caltrans Rest Area we will again head south on 395 to Black Rock Fish Hatchery on the eastern side of 395. It is only about 5 miles.



Black Rock Fish Hatchery was once referred to Black Rock Rearing Ponds. The ponds were created (1941) when the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (LADWP) built a dam for diversion purposes near the source of Black Rock Springs. The ponds were stocked with 450,000 rainbow fingerlings and though some doubted success, in the following spring, 274,385 trout, averaging 5" in length, were planted from the ponds. In 1976 Black Rock Fish Hatchery had its own modernization of a system of concrete raceways constructed that increased the capacity and ease of loading, cleaning and care of the trout. The old rearing pond became the hatchery's broodstock pond. Visiting there this past spring I saw some of the most beautiful (and big) rainbows I've ever seen in my life.

CDFW personnel will be available at both operating Fish Hatchery locations.

Black Rock Fish Hatchery is our "final stop" of the organized tour. Since this is our "final stop", once you have seen everything you want to see you are welcome to head back to Ridgecrest, we just ask that you let the Leader of the Field Trip know you are leaving.

As you head south on 395 back to Ridgecrest there are some potential places to stop. Since Black Rock Fish Hatchery does not have reliable bathroom facilities for the public, just a few miles south in Independence are a couple of places that you can stop and use the facilities.

If you want to let the kids play, Dehy Park in Independence is a great option. The bathroom facilities are normally clean and there is playground equipment. Also, Independence Creek runs along the north side of the park. Be sure to watch the kids around the water if you make this stop. There is a bridge that crosses the creek.

Another option in Independence is the Eastern California Museum. It is not on the main drag (395) but easy to find. If you have never been there this is a great stop. The bathroom facilities are clean and they have lots of cool stuff, including an extensive native basket collection.

In Lone Pine there is of course the Interagency Center at the south end of town. Remember, Interagency Center closes at 4:30pm (gate gets closed at 4:15).

7:30am: meet at the Maturango Museum for check in. Participants will be required to sign a liability waiver. Car caravan will be organized and for those that want to carpool, we'll figure it out there. Families are encouraged.

Be sure you have enough gas (without side trips, 250 miles round trip), car and tires in good running order.

Usual dress code for field trips applies: hat, sunscreen, comfortable walking shoes, layered clothing, water, camera. It is better to have these items and not need them, than need them and not have them.

Will be walking on uneven ground to get to the fish runways and facilities. Parking area also uneven ground.

Bring a picnic lunch to eat while we are at the Division Creek Caltrans Rest Area. Water, snacks, lunch, etc. No alcohol.

Cancellation Policy: If the Museum cancels your trip, you will be given a full refund or you may transfer the money to a different trip. No cash refunds will be given if you cancel.

Ticket price for this tour is:

Member single adult- \$25

Member, two adults- \$40

Non-member single adult- \$30

Non-member two adults- \$50.00

Kids under the age of 14 are free