

Carnero Lake

A shallow lake with a brief and colorful history, Carnero Lake can grow some big fish. Built in 1979, the lake quickly became popular with anglers, to the dismay of downstream water users. Because of the dispute, the Department discontinued stocking for many years. In 1999, the Department has acquired a major share of the water rights, setting the stage for a new and vigorous trout fishery.

Location – Carnero Lake is located at 9,033 feet on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. To get there, drive east on State Highway 260 from Pinetop-Lakeside. About 3 miles past the State Highway 273 junction to Sunrise Park, make a left onto Forest Road 117. Follow this road for 2.5 miles, and then turn right onto Forest Road 117A. Drive 3 miles, and look for the Carnero Lake sign turnoff on the right side of the road. Follow this two-track road a couple hundred yards to the parking area adjacent to the lake. Due to snow and ice, these roads are typically closed from mid-November to mid-April.



Description – Carnero Lake is a shallow 65-acre headwater impoundment of Carnero Creek. It has a maximum depth of ten feet. It's quite weedy, which is problematic for fishing, but is also an indicator of a highly productive lake. It's stocked with subcatchable and catchable-sized rainbow trout in the spring. Because it's at high elevation and shallow, it's subject to periodic winter kills. The best time to fish at Carnero is in the spring. Once the weeds begin growing, it's hard to get a boat or float tube from the shore out to open water, and then it's difficult to even find much open water.

Amenities – There's a cindered parking area, but no other amenities, such as a boat ramp or restroom. Some dispersed camping is allowed in the area. The nearest developed campgrounds and other amenities like food, gas and lodging, are in Greer, 15 miles away.

Fishing Techniques – Fishing from the shoreline or using spinners or lures is difficult at this lake because of the weeds. The best way to fish is from a small boat, canoe or float tube. Fly fish with wooly buggers, prince nymphs or light-colored nymphs in open areas.

Special Notes – Special fishing regulations apply at Carnero. Anglers may use artificial lure and fly only with barbless hooks. The daily bag limit is two trout; one for unlicensed anglers under the age of 14. Boat motors are restricted to electric only.