

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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I was on a fishing binge last week. I fly fished on the Klickitat River and hover fished off the mouth of the White Salmon River on the Columbia River. I also trolled off the mouth of the Klickitat River on the Columbia. I met some new people and got to spend time with old friends. I did all this before going to Spokane for WDFW commission meetings. It was very busy week and I enjoyed it all.

I was scheduled to attend Fish Camp again this year from September 13th through the 17th, and on the 14th I joined the Director of the Washington Department of Fish Wildlife, Jim Unsworth, for a float on the Klickitat River. He had expressed an interest in seeing this river and I arranged for my good friend and guide Johnny Boitano of the Troutwater Fly Shop in Ellensburg to take us. The weather had been in the 90s prior to our float and unfortunately the river was very dirty. This didn't take away from the scenery in this canyon that is lined with scrub oak and maple. It made the fishing tough, though. Visibility was only a few inches when we started the float but it cleared slightly as the day progressed. We spent most of our time casting with large nymphs and an egg below that under indicators. I hooked and released a steelhead early in the drift and when we stopped to let Director Unsworth swing a fly with his fly rod he got a good strike. Later on Unsworth hooked a Chinook salmon on his fly rod. I got another steelhead before the day was over, and this was another wild fish that was released. Given the water conditions this trip would have been a bust without Boitano's intimate knowledge



of the river and where the fish would be holding. We are all eager to give this river another try.

The next day was a real treat for me. My good friend Herb Good had room in his boat and I joined him and his party at the boat basin in Hood River. We ran from the marina down river to where a small fleet of boats was fishing off the mouth of the White Salmon River. This is where he likes to "hover fish" for kings. With this method we lowered a 2 ounce cannon ball, on a 3-foot leader baited with a gob of eggs down 60 feet to the kings that were schooling here. While Good kept the boat positioned over the fish we tried to set the hook when the kings gently mouthed the bait. Knowing when a fish is eating the bait is not as easy as it may seem. The bite is very light, more a pause or a slight dip in the rod tip is the only clue you have to set the hook. Good is an expert at this, though, and lectured us on paying

attention. There is no looking around at the other boats or enjoying the scenery when hover fishing. If you don't keep focused on your rod tip you will not get fish. I have suffered the lash of Herb Goods tongue for not hooking fish on other trips and was particularly attentive this day. It paid off, too. I hooked and landed three nice kings, handed off a fourth and we took home a total of 13 fish for the six of us that morning.

The next day Eric Granstrom and I jumped on Austin Moser's boat, of Austin's Northwest Adventures, with three people from Grays Harbor Unders, an outdoor base lay clothing manufacturer and Doug Wilson, an internationally known photographer. We took off from Rowena Park, which is south of The Dalles and ran over to the mouth of the Klickitat River. There were a lot of boats there and most were doing the hover fishing thing, but Austin opted to try a new method, suggested to him by Shane Magnuson. We would be trolling, and would use 10 ounce cannon balls on droppers with flashers and Super Baits. The new method paid off. Staying in about 60 feet of water Moser trolled well below the pack of boats off the mouth of the Klickitat. When he found the sweet spot in his trolling path he got fish. We lost a few but everyone on the boat got a fish to the net. I had a fish run 220 feet of line off the reel! We had a blast. The forecast for rain was way off, and we got to fish most of the day in sunshine. It was a perfect fishing ending to my days at Fish Camp.

If you haven't heard me talk about Fish Camp before it is an event that I attend each year. Organized by Ed Iman, of The Dalles, it brings together an interesting group. There are writers and broadcasters like myself from all over the Northwest. Also invited to Fish Camp are manufacturers of outdoor products. Each morning we gather at the cook shack for breakfast and then divide up and head out to go fishing. I have had the opportunity to fish for sturgeon, steelhead, walleye, smallmouth bass and salmon. We spend the day fishing and getting to know each other and more about what we all do. In the evening the product people give us presentations on what they produce and often provide us with samples to take home and try. It is very different than going to a show to see products. We actually get to meet the people that make the product and get to know them on a whole different level. They feed us like you wouldn't believe, too. I have to say that Ed Iman did another great job at this year's camp. He brought some great people from both the media and manufacturing side of the business and some super guides for the fishing.

Well, now that I am home I can get back out and fish around here. I think my first trip will be to Vernita for big kings. I can't wait to wrestle with some of these big fish that come up to the Hanford Reach every year.

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