

Welcoming **Dave Graybill** To The **Nickel Ads** *Classifieds* The Fishin' Magician

One of my favorite days every spring is the annual Rock Island Kids Free Fishing Day, which is coming up this Saturday. I never get tired of seeing all the families packed around the Pit Pond, fishing for the rainbow. It was eleven years ago that I first help invite people to come down, and I was doing the event in March to celebrate the earliest opening of trout lakes in our region, the ones near Quincy. These were cold and often wet days, and I am grateful to Art Viola, at the Department of Fish and Wildlife office here in Wenatchee, who talked me into moving it to the weekend prior to the general trout season opener. Now it's usually sunny and warm and the number of people that bring youngsters to this juvenile fishing pond has swelled from just 50 to nearly 600.

One of the things I remember about the first event was how much litter there was around the lake. So much that the next year I got a local McDonald's to give me burger certificates to get the kids to help clean up the area. I gave every kid that came up to get a goody bag of tackle an empty garbage bag. When they brought it back full they got a free burger. It worked great, and they filled two industrial size dumpster. The next year I did the same thing, but the City of Rock Island had cleaned up the area and the kids couldn't even fill their bags. I think some of them went into town and raided garbage cans to get their burger coupon.

The City of Rock Island continued making improvements every year. They cut back the brush so the kids could find more area to fish along the shore, and not just at the Pit Pond. They have made great efforts to make Big Bow and some of the other ponds more fishing friendly and the number of people who fishing in the vicinity of the town of Rock Island has grown. There are still some challenges in keeping the areas around the lakes cleaned up, but it is nothing like it used to be. The city made a commitment to improve conditions at their lakes so more people would have a place to fish nearby and they have made great strides.

The weekend after the Rock Island Kids Free Fishing Day is the lowland lake general trout season opener, and if you haven't thought about where you are going to make your first casts of the season, you may want to give it some thought. Jameson Lake has been in the top ten of the search phrases on my web site for over a month now. Jameson has been one of the most popular destinations for opening weekend for decades. There will be hundreds, if not thousands at Jameson again this year. This is an indicator that people are making plans about where to spend the weekend. Cabins, RV hook ups and even camping space will be getting scarce at many of the more well-known lakes in our region.

I have been giving some thought to the weekend myself, and where I would go if I could be in several places at once. You see, there are so many good options it would be hard to pick just one lake. Usually my wife Eileen and I just hop in the rig and drive around and visit a bunch of lakes to see how people are doing on the opening weekend. Just take some photos at a few lakes, talk to anglers and be sure to get a slice of pie at Jack's Resort at Jameson.

I reviewed the stocking plan for the past couple of years, looking for some trends, and making some educated guesses about where to find some really good fishing, and maybe not where you'd find the usual crowds. A couple things stand out like: last year Deep Lake was planted with 40,000 kokanee, and will be planted with 30,000 again this year. I don't hear much about the kokanee fishing on Deep Lake, but I am sure going to check it out. Clear up in Ferry County, Curlew Lake will release 80,000 rainbow this spring. Not only is that a lot of fresh rainbow, they have been doing this for a few years. They also tag 299 of these trout every year, and if you catch one it could be worth \$10.00 to \$100.00, and even one is worth \$500.00! There are quite a number of these fish that are left over from the year before and they are still in the pool.

There are also some incentives to fish the Conconully Lakes. The town of Conconully has a trout derby every year, and there are some great prizes given away. The fact each of the lakes will be planted with 10,000 rainbow this year is another good reason to consider a trip.

I know that "catching" isn't always the reason people turn out for the opening weekend. I have talked to people that have been coming back to the same lake for 30 years. It's a family tradition more than anything. I think it's great.

Reach Dave at:
www.FishingMagician.com
 or Fishboy@nwi.net



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