

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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We just had a week of the worst weather we've seen this fall. It's been cold and rainy and it seemed that anglers just weren't in the mood. My wife, Eileen, and I made a road trip to check on the fishing in several areas up north last Wednesday. We found very little activity at most places we visited.

We started at Wells Dam. Here it appeared that conditions were perfect for fishing. There was no wind and the current was running just right for good bobber and jig drifts. There was just one trailer at the launch, and we could see the boat trolling along the opposite shore. It looked like they were trying for walleye, and I wasn't there long enough to see if they had any luck.

There were two boats above the dam. They were either slow trolling bobbies or pulling plugs for steelhead. This can be a good time of year to try both of these methods. It was a few years ago that I first discovered anglers trolling bobbies and jigs above Rocky Reach Dam and above Wells. The trick is to use enough weight below your bobber to keep your baited jig in the strike zone while creeping along. This way anglers are able to cover more ground and present their bait to more fish. There are days when this is very productive.

I also noticed that there were two anglers casting from the rip rap above Wells Dam. They were near the first point toward the highway from where the fish ladder opens to the river above Wells Dam. This is a favorite spot in the fall and winter for shore bound anglers. I have seen a lot of steelhead taken from this area over the years. It isn't as easy to get to post 9/11. Before, anglers could drive right up to the guard rail, hop over and pick a spot on the rip rap. Now you must park on the road near the security barrier and walk in. It's a short walk and there are plenty of anglers that are willing to make it for a chance at hooking a bright steelhead this time of year.

I was surprised to see that there wasn't a single boat at the Rocks below Pateros. This is a consistent producer of steelhead in the winter, but since reports of good fishing

have been so rare, I expect to see boats here only on the weekend. There weren't any boats fishing in the estuary above the bridges either.

I did see some folks at the docks at Pateros, though, and I stopped and walked down to see if they were having any luck. There was one angler that had had some action that morning. He had hooked two kings. I saw a few jumping, including one king that jumped four times in a row. I was amazed at the number of kings that I saw at Wells and from the shore at Pateros. The season closed on October 15th, and they are usually long gone by November, but they are still plentiful this year. Of course we had quite a run of summer fish this season, with over 91,000 passing over Rocky Reach Dam.

We continued on up river and took the bridge in Brewster to the other side so I could get a good look at the water near the Blow Hole from the highway. I didn't see a boat here. In fact I didn't see a single boat on this popular stretch of water at Bridgeport. Once again it looked like conditions were great for a day of steelhead fishing up here.

Since we weren't finding any steelhead anglers, we decided to take a look at Rufus Woods. There are usually anglers fishing for triploids above Chief Joseph Dam. Here we had a surprise. There is a new fishing access above the dam! I hadn't seen it before and it was Eileen that actually spotted it as we drove to the boat ramp. I turned around and pulled in to check it out and one of the Colville officers was there checking on things, and he told me that it had been finished and open for three months. There is a pit toilet, a parking area, and a nice level area to fish from down the

bank on the water. There is even a fire pit at the new access. When I went to take a look at the bank area, an angler was coming up the hill, and he had a 3-pound triploid on his stringer. He said he caught another one just like it the day before. Word is this is the new shore fishing hot spot at Rufus Woods. To reach the new access, you take Murphy Road to the left and then take the first left at the cross roads. If you go straight ahead you will be at the fishing spot at the base of the powerline tower. If you go right you will wind down to the parking area with the handicapped fishing platform, picnic tables and fire boxes.

Last weekend I went up to Fish Lake, and got to spend some time visiting with Scott West at the Cove Resort. The day before there had been a special event on the dock and the fishing had been very good. Lots of rainbow were caught and even one big triploid. There isn't any snow up here yet, so it would be a good time to get out on Fish Lake to troll flies for rainbow and triploids. This is also the time of year that the big brown trout are caught.

I am not sure where my next fishing trip will take me. There are a lot of options out there. Could be Fish Lake for trout, or Rufus Woods for trout, or maybe the Columbia for walleye. We'll see.

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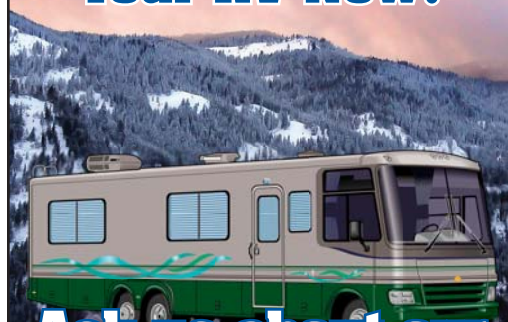
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