

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

Nickel Ads
Classifieds



two outings on Fish Lake. The perch were up to 9 inches and meaty. They also had one 12-inch rainbow in their bucket and they said that there were days when trout outnumbered the perch catch. A Swedish Pimple with a Macks Lure Glo Hook below it has been the winning combination to attract strikes from both the perch and rainbow. There was no snow on top of the ice at Fish Lake. This makes getting around on the ice a slippery proposition, but it sure beats slogging through a foot or more of slush.

Last Thursday, I made my first visit this winter to Rocky Ford Creek, near Ephrata. Rocky Ford is popular with fly fishers in winter, as it offers open water that doesn't freeze. Rocky Ford is spring fed and stays at a fairly constant temperature throughout the year. It also offers a good opportunity to catch some very large rainbow, and I mean BIG.

I parked near the middle parking lot and walked down to the stream, and although there were quite a few people there on a Thursday afternoon, I was able to find room for myself to fish a nice stretch of the stream. My rod was still rigged from my last visit to the Ford. I had my intermediate sinking line on the 10-foot Temple Ford rod. On the business end I had a mini leech and about 15 inches below that a small, grey scud. I would cast this set up, let it sink a bit and strip it in. The first fish I hooked was a dandy Rocky Ford

rainbow. It took me into my backing twice and ran almost to the far bank. I finally got it to the bank, and I broke off a section of reed the length of the fish so I could see how long it was when I got home. Turned out it measured 27 inches! I made my way up stream from where I got this fish and got three more that measured 22 inches. I got two more fish that were just 12-inchers that must have been recently planted. Most of the fish I caught took the scud, but the first really big one hit the leech. I got all of my fish in the space of about two hours. This is pretty good fishing at the Ford by my standards.

Then I packed it in so I could check on the condition of the bridges. I had heard that they were in disrepair and had to see for myself. The upper bridge had work done on it and is fine, but the lower bridge is a different story. There are chains with locks on them at both ends of the bridge to discourage anglers from using it. I have no idea when this bridge will be back in service. I will make some calls and try to find out.

On Friday afternoon my wife Eileen and I drove up north to see what we could learn about the steelhead fishing. When we stopped at Wells Dam I looked over the edge and watched a boat land a steelhead down below me. There was another boat that appeared to be anchored off the rip rap bank near the fish ladder outlet, and I think there were a couple of guys fishing on the bank there, too.

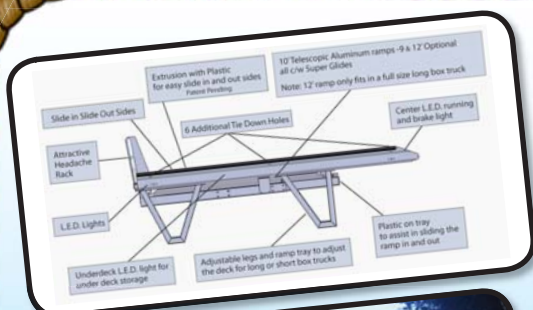
We drove on up to Pateros and actually set up on one of the docks there. We had the whole waterfront to ourselves, which wasn't a good sign. There were chunks and sheets of ice floating all around off the docks, and I could see that

the estuary above the bridges was frozen all the way across. While we were fishing Lindsay, the fish checker, came by to see how we were doing. We didn't have much to report, but we learned from her that there are some fish being caught, and most of them are coming from the area above Wells Dam. She knew of four keepers that had been taken that Friday. When we headed back we saw a boat that had just come in at the Star launch, which is the one above Wells Dam. Brad Wagner, of Bobber Down Guide Service, was there with some friends and family, and he showed me a photo to two nice keepers that they got that day.

Free snowshoe tours are available again this year at the National Fish Hatchery in Leavenworth. These take about two hours and snowshoes are provided, along with a trained guide that points out signs of wildlife and explains how they adapt to winter. You should dress for the weather and only children over age eight can come on the tour. The tours are offered on Friday, Saturday and some Sundays from January through February. Reservations are required and they can be made on line. To learn more about the free tours and make a reservation, log onto to www.friendsofnwhatcheries.org.

I sure hope this calm and moderate weather holds up. I am very anxious to get back out on Rocky Ford for some of those big rainbow, and I want to make a trip to Lake Roosevelt with my Kingfisher boat to get after the big kokanee and rainbow up there.

Reach Dave at:
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