## Welcoming DaveGraybi agician This coming weekend will see the biggest

crowds of anglers for the year. It's the annual opener of the lowland lakes, and thousands of anglers will be headed our way to try their luck on the many wonderful lakes in our region. I plan to take a survey of the opening day action on some of the lakes in Okanogan County, but in the meantime I have made a couple of trips to Lake Chelan for the jumbo kokanee being caught this year.

I went up last Thursday with fishing friends Rollie Schmitten, Tom Bartlett and Bob Whitehall. Whitehall has been filling his cooler with kokanee on Chelan consistently this season, so we were confident that we were going to have a busy day catching fish. Well, this wasn't our day. We got off to a slow start, which has happened to me earlier this season, so I wasn't too concerned. When you find where the kokanee are hanging out the action picks up fast, with doubles and triples not unusual

However, we couldn't find the fish, not any of them. We looked up lake, down lake without success. We tried the usual spots and some unusual spots and only saw a few small specks on the depth sounder. We watched other boats for action, and did see one fish landed; just one all day. We did get one fish, so I guess you could say we didn't get skunked. We gave it a great effort and threw everything we had at them, but basically there

wasn't anything around to get what we were throwing. It seemed the kokanee had just disappeared. We went home scratching our heads wondering where they went. From what I gathered, except for a brief good morning bite everyone was getting blanked. It happens sometimes, and boy it is humbling

I wasn't going to give up, though, and called my brother Rick to make another trip to Chelan last Sunday. I was a little nervous when we got off to a slow start again, but we found fish and put three in the box pretty quickly. We settled into a rhythm and with our baits trolled at 90 and 70 feet deep, picked up fish fairly steadily. We were fishing hoochie rigs that were either purple or pink and ran into enough fish to keep our attention. We did experience the lulls that are common with kokanee fishing, but we did have eleven fish in the cooler when we had to head for the launch due to high winds. The size of the kokanee is holding up, with our smallest fish 16 inches and the largest just shy of 18. There were a lot of boats on the lake last Sunday, and we saw quite a few nets out around us. It looks like the kokanee action at Chelan is going to continue to be good for a while longer.

Prospects for the opening weekend of our area lakes are very good. I recently talked to biologists and fish managers throughout the region and they all had good things to say about the conditions of our lakes. Ice came off early this year so trout have been

feeding and getting active earlier than usual.

Test fisheries that have been conducted have shown good growth of fry and very good sized juveniles and carryovers. The Department of Fish and Wildlife changed their strategy last season, planting fewer but larger fish, and it has carried over this year. Anglers should be very satisfied with their catches on the opening weekend.

Be sure to have your new license for the year. That's the first thing to remember before heading out with the family for the annual fishing trip. Take the time to go over your gear and be sure there is good line on the reels and you know where your favorite lures have been stored over the off season. Do everyone a favor and test fire your boat motor before you get to the dock. Too many fishing trips have ended right here, due to a fouled plug or dead battery. Practice good etiquette while launching. Be sure that you have the life jackets on board. Every child 12 years old or younger is required to be wearing one while in the boat. It's not a bad idea to have them wear them while on the dock as well. Pack the sun screen and the bug repellent. Keep comfortable and be safe.

I want to thank everyone that helped out at the Rock Island

Kids Fishing Day last weekend. The volunteers, headed up by Ray Pearson, did a great job at the cook shack, handing out donuts in the morning and providing 400 hot dogs and chips for the hungry anglers. Pepsi provided the water and soft drinks again. The Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association turned out in force making sure that everyone that needed a rod and reel, tackle or bait was taken care of. I also wanted to thank the Moses Lake Irrigation and Rehabilitation District and Pepsi for providing a great Kids Derby at Connelly Park the week before. I wasn't able to attend but was told that the MLIRD staff did a wonderful job for the community. There are other kids fishing days coming up in our region this spring and summer, and if you want to find out about them, visit my web site at FishingMagician.com and click on the Pepsi logo on my Home Page. This will open a calendar of events for families.

I am really looking forward to getting out checking on the lakes in our region on the opening day of fishing season. Seeing all the families enjoying themselves is really fun. I am also going to be part of the Pepsi Youth Day for Apple Blossom. I hope you all have a great opening weekend of fishing and fun at Apple Blossom.

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



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