

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

My wife Eileen and I had one of our best trips of the year last week. Brian Nielson, BJ's Guide Service from Moses Lake, has been trying to get me to float the Grande Ronde for years, and we finally made it. The river is in the far southeast corner of the state, in steep canyon land, and Nielson has been eager to show me the spectacular scenery and the fishing for fall steelhead.

I made sure that if I was going to fish the river with Nielson that Eileen would come along. She had never been in this part of the state. We even made a quick stop at Palouse Falls on the way down, and she saw the raw beauty of the rolling hills of the Palouse. The last town you pass through is Anatone, which is known for their population sign that even counts the town's cats and dogs. Then the road drops sharply downhill. The last stretch is called Rattle Snake, and there are 110 turns in just eight miles. My brakes were smoking when I reached the bottom.

What is waiting for you at the bottom of the hill is a bridge over the Grande Ronde and right after you cross it you are at Boggan's Oasis. This is the center of activity for anglers fishing the river. This is where you can get a cabin, a meal, arrange for guide services and shuttles. The atmosphere at Boggan's is something special. Everyone is there for one purpose: fishing and the staff is wonderful.

We got there in time to settle into our cabin and meet Nielson for dinner. Our conversation about



how the fishing has been and how to prepare for the following day was interrupted a couple of times when people called Boggan's asking for him. We ate our meals while Nielson answered questions about how to fish the river. Eileen was very impressed with Nielson, taking the time to give out information even to people that weren't fishing with him.

We spent a restless evening in our cozy cabin. We were both very excited and were up very early to dress and get to the restaurant for a hearty breakfast before heading to the boat launch. Anglers should know that they can opt for a package that includes three meals with their lodging; dinner the night before, breakfast the next day, and one of the best lunches I've ever had while floating the river. The cherry pie that came with the

lunch was home made!

We woke up to a surprise. It had rained hard over night, but it was clear and warm in the morning! Nielson mentioned that the canyon seems to have its own weather pattern, and he was right. The forecasts I had been looking at called for lots of clouds, even rain and a chilly low 40 degrees. We woke up to 51 and it got warmer.

Nielson drives a very comfortable Hyde drift boat with plenty of room for all of us and our gear. He likes to pull plugs on the Grande Ronde. He has been fishing the river for 33 years now, knows what works, and sees no need to change. He runs Hot Shots and changed colors as we moved from shade to sunshine as we floated down the canyon. He not only knows every rock and seam on the river, but also some very interesting history of the area, pointing out old homesteads and wagon roads as we floated by.

On one of the very first drifts the rod on my side went down, but when I picked it up and set the hook the plug came flying out of the water right at me. Just a couple of drifts later I did set the hook properly and we landed a bright 7-pound hatchery buck. There are some bigger fish in the Grande Ronde, but this was a pretty representative fish. Nielson runs just eight-pound test line on the shallow and very clear river, so I had my hands full and the fish made several great runs before I got it to the shallows where Nielson was able to put the net under it.

I managed to miss another good strike further down river. There are a lot of distractions while floating along. There are bald and golden eagles soaring over head, kingfishers darting over the water, deer in the meadows, and we were trying to spot the bighorn sheep that inhabit the canyons.

Eileen was alert enough in the very last hole to grab the rod and set the hook on a good fish. She handed me the rod and started shooting video. A wild buck had the plug and tore up stream, down stream and all over the hole before it tired enough to bring to the shallows. Nielson carefully released the beauty, that weighed about 8 pounds, and we celebrated a great day on the water. If you would like to have a day like this, check out Nielson's web site, www.bjguide.com. You won't find a better person for a day on the Grande Ronde. I think you'll enjoy the Fishing TV Show that Eileen made of the trip, too. You'll be able to watch it in early December. Remember, you don't have to have cable. You can watch the shows on your computer.

I've invited Nielson to join me for a day on the upper Columbia. He said he wanted to fish for triploids on Rufus Woods. I told him that we will catch plenty of triploids and may even get a few steelhead while fishing below Chief Joseph. I hope he can make it soon.

Reach Dave at: www.FishingMagician.com
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