

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

Steelhead fishing opened on the Columbia and most of the tributaries this week. Anglers are out in force to participate in this treasured fall and winter fishery. Steelhead catches are expected to be good, particularly at the mouths of the rivers, as flows are very low on all of the streams in our region. While I waited for the announcement of the steelhead season, I took advantage of a sunny fall day and visited Fish Lake. I also made trip to Vernita to finish a video on the fall fishing down there.

When I saw the forecast for a clear and warm day I just had to make another trip to Fish Lake, near Lake Wenatchee. I had a blast there on my wife's birthday, trolling flies earlier in the month. I called one of my buddies, Tom Bartlett, who lives in Plain, and he was able to join me for the afternoon.

We met at the Cove at 2 o'clock and launched the Jetcraft in sunny but breezy conditions. The action started off slow, but as we approached the opposite shore we got into fish. Our fly rods were bouncing as smaller rainbow swatted our flies, and when we were releasing rainbow from the two outside rods, I noticed that my middle rod (I have the two pole permit) was sort of dragging. Thinking that I had snagged some weeds I casually begin retrieving my fly. All of sudden it got heavy; turns out that I had a triploid on the line. The large leech on my 5 weight got its attention. Bartlett netted the fish and we continued to troll and catch fish in this area.

We made our way up to the top end of the



lake and found very good numbers of trout willing to hit our flies up here. The wind was blowing just hard enough to rock our boat when we trolled broadside to the waves, so we ran back down to the bottom end where it was calmer. The fish were waiting for us. We had doubles and triples and were having a great time. I looked over in time to see my 3 weight rod bend over drastically in the holder. I snatched it out and knew immediately I had a big one on. As it got closer to the boat we could see the flash of a large triploid. This fish took me back and forth from one side of the boat to the other before I could get it in close enough for Bartlett to slip the net under it. This one was even bigger than the first one. I was happy my light leader and knot held up.

We were fishing with that brown bunny pattern that worked so well the last time I was at Fish Lake. Bartlett took one with him and will be tying up some more. I don't want to run out of this particular fly, it sure works. Nadine West, at the Cove, mentioned that even the dock anglers are catching big triploids quite often. Fishing will get better here though the fall, right up until the snow gets too deep to launch or fish from the dock. This is also prime time to catch the big browns that inhabit the lake.

A couple of days later I was up at 3 a.m. to get to the gas station at Desert Aire by 5:30 to meet Shane Magnuson, Upper Columbia Guide Service. His clients, Bob Barrett and John Gustin, were happy to have me aboard to finish shooting a video for the Fishing TV Show. We started in the King Hole, but the action wasn't fast enough for Magnuson, so we ran down river.

He put us into fish trolling Super Baits and back trolling eggs. Barrett and Gustin both got their limits, and were nice enough to allow me to get mine, as well. We all had our fish in the box and were headed back to the ramp by noon. We weren't the only ones getting fish. There's a fishing party going on below Priest Rapids Dam. The season ends on the 22nd down here and fishing is at its peak. You can bet that there will be a drop in traffic as hunting seasons are going on and steelhead fishing open on the upper Columbia. If you want to fill your freezer for smoking this would be the place to do it.

I spent a good part of one day getting my steelhead gear together. I will be on the upper Columbia one day this week, and the next on the Methow River. I will be bobber and jig fishing one day and fly fishing the next, so I had a lot to do. I re-tied three rigs. One I loaded with a new line that I am really excited about. Berkley introduced NanoFil last year for spin fishing. It is a uni-filament line and was only available in 12-pound test. Although this was too light for steelhead fishing, I tested it and found that it floated like a cork and I encourage them to make it in a heavier test and in a hi-vis version. They did. It is now available in 17-pound in a bright green. I am very excited about this new line. It could be "the answer" for bobber and jig fishing. My fly fishing steelhead reel was already loaded with a new weight-forward dry line, so I didn't have much to do. I hope to learn a lot on the trip down the Methow.

I won't be getting much sleep this week. The anticipation of these two steelhead trips will keep me awake—with visions of big steelhead dancing in my head!

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