

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

Nickel Ads

There are lots of fall Chinook being landed throughout the Columbia River and coho being caught now, too. The steelhead season opened last week, and I got a chance to float the Methow River.

I was waiting for the announcement of the opening of steelhead fishing, and planned a trip for late in the week. Sure enough, the word came on Wednesday the 8th and I had to wait two days to get out fishing. Right now you can catch two marked (clipped) steelhead a day on the main stem Columbia, Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan rivers. The Similkameen will open on November 1st. I want to remind everyone that it is required to keep all marked steelhead and all unmarked fish must be immediately released without removing them from the water. Also, steelhead with floy tags or with holes punch in their tails must also be released. Anglers that are heading down to the Hanford Reach to fish for salmon should be aware that they can now retain marked steelhead, too. It is important that those who plan to fish for steelhead go to the Department of Fish and Wildlife web site for all the details pertaining to these new fisheries. There is boundary information and other regulations that relate to each of these steelhead seasons. Knowing that salmon are often stacked up in the Bridgeport area, my wife Eileen and I made a quick trip up there to try it out. We had a bunch of hits back trolling plugs and landed a couple of jacks.

My fishing buddy Rolie Schmitten and I are two



lucky anglers. Our friend Jim Passage had a trip set up for floating the Methow River with Jeff Brazda last Friday and due to some family circumstances couldn't make it. He was gracious in telling the two of us to go ahead with the trip. Both of us had fished with Brazda on the Methow in the past and the weather was going to be perfect for a first float down the river.

We met Jeff at 6:30 a.m. at the Methow Café and then followed him to the Lower Burma Road take out, left my rig there and then ran up to Upper Burma to launch. We got our gear together; the rods rigged and shoved off when it got light enough to see. I think we missed a fish right under the bridge, while we were getting settled, and then pushed on downstream. We had another very suspicious hit or two on the straight run below the bridge, but no hook ups. When we came around the corner I saw

a familiar stretch of water, and said that we were going to get fish when we got there. Sure enough my indicator went down right at the top of the hole and I had a hot fish on. It ran up stream to the very top edge of the hole, then way back down stream and it took a long time to get close enough to the net to scoop up. It was a bright marked fish, too, so we were off to a great start. Brazda thought this hole was worth another trip through and rowed us back up to the top. We tossed our rigs back out and boom, down went an indicator again! Now we had two marked fish on the stringer. Not too much further down stream we got another marked fish, and it was just 10 a.m.

It was a beautiful day and we didn't want to have to row out if we got another marked fish, so I switched to fishing for coho. I had brought a spinning rod along just for this purpose. Brazda tied on a pink-and-white jig and when got into the right kind of water I would toss this out and twitch it back to the boat. In the first hole I got a hit and even had a fish on for a short time. We continued on down stream with me twitching my jig and Schmitten casting his fly rod. He got two unmarked steelhead and missed a few.

I have to say that I was very pleased to find the Methow Valley showing fall colors but not too much evidence of the fires in the stretch that we fished. Sure we found groves of trees that had burned along the way and could see bare hill sides where the fire

had burned through. There is plenty of foliage along the river bank, and there was a slight tint to the water. I would be watching the weather this fall and winter and as long as we don't get a heavy rain I wouldn't hesitate to make another trip to the Methow.

We had reached the last patch of water we were able to fish before we took out, and on the first pass Schmitten hooked a big one that threw the hook. The next pass produced nothing for him, but on the third and last try he hooked and landed a nice marked steelhead. We finished the day with our limits of beautiful, bright fish on the Methow. What a day. If you want to have a similar experience, give Brazda's Fly Fishing a call. You can reach him at 253-307-3210. Look for the video of our trip on the FishingMagician.com Fishing TV Page soon, too.

Other than when I switched to fishing for coho with a jig, Brazda had us rigged with either a stone fly with a bead on the dropper or two beads. We were using 7 and 8 weight fly rods and these fish really gave us a fierce battle, with lots of jumps and burning runs up and down stream. We hooked well over a dozen fish on our trip and we saw many steelhead in shallow runs as we moved down stream. We didn't see as many kings or coho as we expected. They will get there, though.

Reach Dave at:
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