

# The Fishin' Magician

Welcoming

Dave Graybill

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I finally got a chance to sneak down to one of the holes on the Wenatchee River to give the steelhead fishing a try. I had been traveling, and then "under the weather" the last couple of weeks. It was great to cast a bobber in hopes of seeing it driven under with my jig in a steelhead's jaw. This wasn't going to happen for me, but I still felt blessed to be able to get out on a nice winter day and get back to fishing. I learned that quite a few anglers are starting to venture out on our area rivers.

While I was fishing on the Wenatchee Jeff Stroup, with the Department of Fish and Wildlife stopped by. He was doing his usual survey of the river, checking to see if anglers were having any success and keeping tabs on the number of hatchery versus wild fish being caught. He told me that there have been some good days on the Wenatchee lately. He and his father Bob had a very good day, hooking five and landing four. One of which was a keeper. He reported that one boat that floated the lower river had four keepers when he checked them. The ration of hatchery over wild fish is still very high, and that is good news for anglers that still want to get in their licks on steelhead. The season should remain open for some time. The severely cold weather and high water that kept anglers off the water earlier this winter has resulted in very few wild fish being caught and released, so the season is extended.

I also caught Shane Magnuson, Upper Columbia Guide, by phone. He happened to be floating the river at the time with his friend Amanda. She had caught a fish on a bobber and he had caught one drifting. Not a bad day. There is some foul weather forecast for a couple of days next week, but



the temperatures are to remain fairly warm. There should be some more clear and sunny days for steelheaders before the season ends.

I did a quick check on stream flows on our area rivers and this is what I learned. The Similkameen is running at 1,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), and that is double the mean flow for this time of year. The Methow is running closest to its mean flow. At Winthrop is about at par and at the mouth just a couple hundred cfs over normal flow. The good news on the Entiat is that the water temperature is warming. It had gotten as chilly as 25 degrees and fish had even abandoned the area near the mouth in the Columbia. Fishing here should pick up now. The Wenatchee River at Peshastin is running 2,500 cfs and the mean flow for this time of year is usually at 1,000. At Monitor is at double the

typical cfs. Even with the higher-than-normal flows, the water is clear and warming, so anglers that are hitting the Wenatchee are seeing some success. The Methow has been most consistent the past few weeks. The Okanogan River remains frozen, but with the warming weather I hope to see it break up, possibly toward the end of the month. Then the fishing will be something else. I am very anxious for the ice to clear and to be able to fish the Okanogan.

All steelhead anglers are reminded that they must keep all adipose fin clipped hatchery steelhead. Remember the retention of hatchery fish is essential to having the ability to have steelhead seasons. Sport anglers are a management tool, and by removing hatchery fish, and increasing the ability for wild steelhead to spawn, we are able to fish for these fish which are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The warming weather is also good news for those who plan to fish the big Trout Derby at the lakes in the Quincy Wildlife Area. I know I have mentioned this before, but I want to remind everyone that there are tagged trout worth a total of \$5,000.00 being planted in Quincy and Burke lakes, and on Saturday, March 5th those who buy tickets to the derby will get a chance to cash in if they catch one

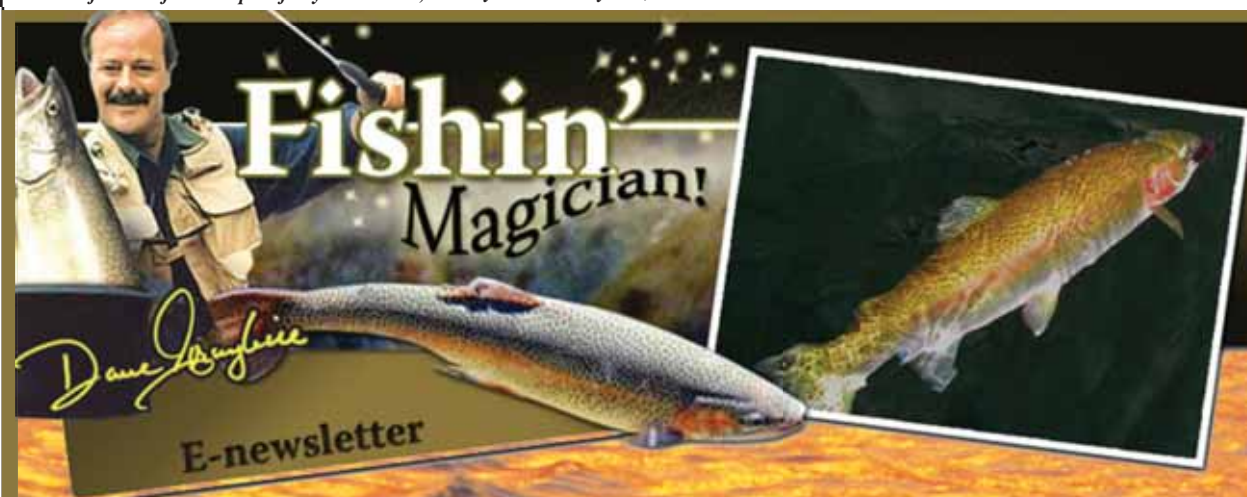
of them. This should make the popular March 1st opening of these lakes something to look forward to for hundreds of anglers that fish it that first weekend. The derby will be delayed until the first weekend in April if Burke and Quincy lakes are more than 50 percent covered with ice.

I also want to remind anglers that there are a couple of big doings happening this coming weekend. On Friday the 22nd Annual Central Washington Sportsman's Show starts in Yakima. It is held every year at the Sundome, and is the largest show of its kind in Central Washington.

If you plan to go on Saturday, you'll want to be back in Cashmere in time to attend the Annual Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association Game Feed. This is when this group fills its coffers with the proceeds from silent and live auctions and the sale of raffle tickets and such. The funds generated are all spent locally on the enhancement of fish and wildlife and for educational efforts for kids. The game feed is something else, too.

Take advantage of the clear and sunny days that we get this time of year. We are blessed with the ability to fish for and catch steelhead in these conditions. I love living here on the "dry" side of the state!

Reach Dave at:  
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