

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician



I have since learned that there are some other great kokanee fisheries in our region. Some of them start much earlier than the one in Chelan and other last much longer into summer. This year, I learned that the fishing for kokanee at Palmer Lake had begun in late February and early March. This lake is located at the northern end of Okanogan County and is best known for good smallmouth bass fishing.

Reports of good fishing had been filtering in to me and what really got my attention was the size of the kokanee. I had always known that kokanee of about 12 inches came from the lake, but this year I was hearing about fish of 15 inches and even a few to 18 inches. This is the earliest in the season of good fishing that I am aware of.

Another lake that allows anglers an opportunity for early season fishing for kokanee is Buffalo Lake. This lake is located on the Colville Reservoir, about ten miles from the town of Coulee Dam. The lake opens for fishing every year on April 14th, which is much earlier than our general lowland lake season opens the last weekend in April. A Colville Tribal Permit is required to fish the lake, and they can be purchased at Reynolds Resort at the west end.

I have fished Buffalo Lake many times on Memorial Weekend, because it gets so little pressure. I have taken mixed catches of trout and kokanee while targeting rainbow. Most of the kokanee I have caught at this time of year are 11 to 12 inches. I finally got a chance to get back to Buffalo Lake in the fall last year. I had always heard that the fall was the best time to fish for them, and I found that this was true. The fish had grown through the summer and were a fat 12 to 14 inches. I was able to attract strikes from the Buffalo Lake kokanee with just a black-back, silver bellied floating Rapala. I put these lures down to about 35 feet on my downrigger, and as I recall the action was fast-paced.

Next on my list of places to fish for kokanee is Lake Chelan. Usually by early to mid-May the fish are showing up in the lower basin. The numbers of fish that migrated down from the upper lake's tributaries and feeder streams builds through the spring and fishing can be quite good through the month of June.

The most popular fishing area is just off Lakeside Park at the bottom end of Lake Chelan. The majority of anglers will be trolling a set of Mack's Lure Flash Lites, trailed by Wedding Ring spinner or Kokanee Pro. I also use a small trout dodger, either a size 0000 or smaller in place of the Flash Lites.

An outstanding kokanee fishery that I tried for the first time last season was at Billy Clapp Lake, about 16 miles to the east of Soap Lake. I had fished at Billy Clapp for smallmouth bass years ago and had always meant to go back.

I fished the lake three times last year beginning in late July and early August. We didn't limit but always came home with kokanee that were up to 19 inches long and weighed close to 3 pounds! On my first exploratory trip my wife Eileen and I caught seven in about four or five hours fishing. The smallest was 15 inches and the rest were 18 or 19 inches. These are exceptional fish.

I tried a variety of lures. People had recommended an orange Apex, but I had my best luck on, of all things, an orange Super Duper with a Mylar strip. These lures were trolled way back, 75 to 100 feet behind the downrigger ball at about 1.5 to 1.7 miles per hour. I got most of my fish at 50 to 70 feet, and got some as deep as 90 feet deep. You can bet I will be making a few trips to Billy Clapp for kokanee, and plan to start earlier.

Another lake that I am going to add to my list of kokanee fisheries this year is Deep Lake, which is found just above Park Lake. I have noticed that the lake is planted with kokanee, but have never fished it.

See, there is a pretty good list of kokanee lakes to try in our region. I plan to start earlier and fish a lot longer this season!

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

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