



Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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I had a gap in the sport shows that I was attending and managed to get out fishing for an afternoon at Rocky Ford Creek, near Ephrata. Boy was I glad to be outdoors again. I also ran up to Fish Lake, near Lake Wenatchee, to check on the ice conditions and angler success or lack of. I can report good news on both.

I wasn't in a hurry to get to Rocky Ford. My plan was to fish into the late afternoon, when I felt that the Bunny Leeches would work the best. I also had a new sculpin pattern to try and was told that it fished best in low light. So my arrival to the stream wasn't until after noon.

There was a good crowd of anglers spread out along the banks of the creek, but I found room toward the upper end at one of my favorite spots. Casting here usually produces almost immediate results, but the trout just weren't impressed with my leeches. After about an hour or so of fruitless effort, I finally sat down and tied up my tried true rigging of a Mini Leech and Ultra Scud. On my second cast I hooked and released a fish that just barely fit in my landing net that has a 20-inch opening. On the very next cast I hooked another fish. This one really gave me a battle. I would get it close to shore and it would muscle its way back out into the stream. When I finally got it close to the bank it was obvious that it wouldn't fit in the net. Laying my net next to it the fish stretched from the end to half way up the handle. What a brute! It was a gorgeous



fish, too; sporting a perfect high dorsal fin and pristine tail. Shaking off another small trout I moved up to the very top and tried the fishing just across the bridge. There were some dandies in feeding lanes and lots of rises just below the bridge. Using a floating line just wasn't working in the deeper water and flow here. In my bag there was some of the putty that is used to weight a line, so I molded some of it on my leader and then my flies were getting down to where the fish were laying. Casting across to the far bank I lured a big fish out of the reeds and it struck hard and broke me off. Well, I had had enough. I just wasn't dressed properly for the day that remained in the mid 30s. I packed it up and was back at my truck my 3 p.m. For the short time I was there Rocky Ford Creek didn't disappoint me, and I can't wait to get back down there to see if that big trout will

take my fly again.

Arriving at Fish Lake last Saturday it was obvious that the word was out that the fishing was good. There were lots of rigs in the parking lot area. The temperature was just below freezing. Stepping out of the truck my feet went out from under me and I went down hard on the ice. Moving with more caution, I made my way out to the lake. The first angler I encountered showed me he had four inches of good ice, and he had a few perch. The next group had a lot of perch on the ice and brought in a few more in the time it took me to take a few photos. They were working their way to limits of 25 fish at a good clip. The ice was good last Saturday at Fish Lake, but I want to remind anglers that conditions do change. Warmer weather has been forecast and although the lake is at near 2,000 feet in elevation, the ice could thin quickly. Always carefully check on conditions before heading out on any lake to ice fish. I have had reports of very thick ice on Patterson Lake, near Winthrop, and particularly Bonaparte Lake near Tonasket. Patterson is known for good catches of rainbow and perch through the ice. Bonaparte Lake is famous for its kokanee, triploid eastern brook, tiger trout and lake trout.

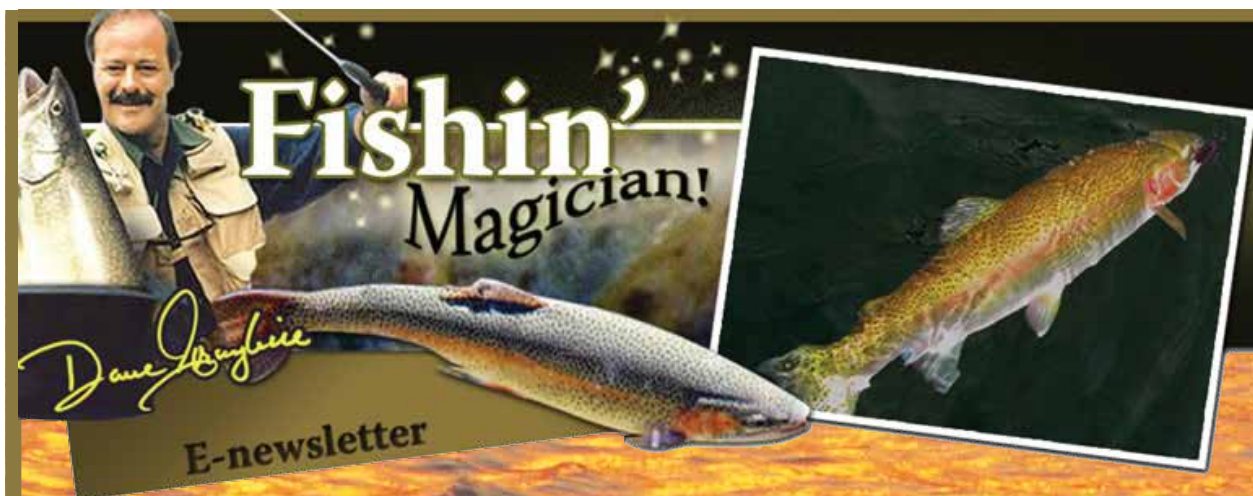
I was able to visit with some people that have been fishing the upper Columbia and the Methow River for steelhead. Of the two rivers, it sounds like the Methow is a better bet. I have noticed that there is very little pressure on both

of these streams, and there should be plenty of fish in them. Fishing the Methow has been hampered by icy conditions, which is common in the winter, but why the steelhead bit in the Columbia has been slow is a mystery. I am hearing of decent catches being made above Wells Dam, however. I am not sure just when, but sometime in February the steelhead fishing is going to be excellent on all our local rivers. I am very eager to get in on this action when it occurs. The Okanogan, Methow and Wenatchee are famous for great steelhead fishing in February.

Don't forget to get your tickets for the annual Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association Wild Game Feed and Auction that's coming up on February 14th. You can get them at Hooked on Toys in Wenatchee. Also, the Tri-Cities chapter of the Costal Conservation Association is coming up on March 14th. I am mentioning this one very early as it is the biggest banquet the CCA has in Eastern Washington, and if you want to sponsor, donate to it, or attend you should contact Brad Schilperoort right away. Send him an e-mail at bradschilperoort@yahoo.com.

I am not sure where I will be fishing this week, but I will let you know what I learn about fishing here in Eastern Washington next week. Hope to see you out there!

Reach Dave at:
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