

# Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

## The Fishin' Magician

It has been a great week. I didn't even hook a steelhead, but I sure saw some great water. Since my last column my wife and I have surveyed the steelhead fishing rivers from Riverside to Rocky Reach Dam. We stopped along the way and video taped many of the public accesses and many of the better holes. We have three shows done for the Fishing TV Show that document the waters all the way from Enloe Dam on the Similkameen to Rocky Reach Dam. I hope these shows will be of help to steelhead anglers who are not familiar with the rivers in our area.

While fishing one of the holes on the Okanogan below the Okanogan River Guest House, near Riverside, we ran into Keith Roe, with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. He checks anglers' catches, not looking for violations, but to record the number of hatchery and wild fish that are being taken. He also checks for tagged steelhead and takes the noses of those with wire tags and will even point out where a PIT tag will be found in a fish, so you don't wind up eating it.

Roe was very informative on what is going on out there in the world of steelhead fishing. He not only keeps track of the catches, he catches a lot of fish himself. I have a box full of the jigs that he ties, and he specializes in very small jigs for fishing the low and clear water that is often found on the smaller steelhead streams in our area. When we talked to him on the Okanogan he shared that most of the fish were being taken in the lower end of the river, with Rattlesnake being one of the places he had stopped earlier that day, and checked three hatchery fish.

I wasn't having any luck in the hole I was fishing, due to a number of Chinook salmon residing in the hole. They were fun to watch as they rolled and chased each other around, but since they were in the hole, the chance of finding a steelhead there wasn't good. Roe agreed that until the Chinook finished spawning, there were many holes that steelheaders could just write off.

The fact that it had rained and blew hard the night before didn't help me either. The Okanogan was off color and full of leaves and debris. We did run into one lucky fly fisher at the Barnholt Loop. He had a nice 9-pound fish cleaned and ready for the grill. He had taken the fish lower in the river, but had left it off with a friend while he tried his luck elsewhere on the river before he headed for his place in Twisp.

Earlier this week we started our survey at Pateros. I set up near the Bridge, right in front of the new Pateros Lakeshore Inn. I had a spectacular time here once, hooking six fish and landing two wild fish and a hatchery in less than two hours, and so I always have to make a few casts from this spot. Of course, I will never duplicate that experience, and I didn't even get a bite this time.

We fished our way up the docks and one angler had one on for a short time and I noticed a fish trailing behind a boat on a stringer. One of the people that joined me on the shore by the bridge told me that there had been quite a downturn in the fishing the past couple of days. It had been hot. On Friday he saw one boat take eight keepers right in front of him, and many other fish were caught. The

next day the river had dropped and the bite fell off. By Sunday the river was down by a couple of feet and the current had dropped to nothing. Fishing was tough.

On my way out of town I wanted to get a photo of the launch above the bridge in the Methow River. As we stepped out of the car we saw a familiar sight. It was Keith Roe, pulling into the launch to check on a boat that had just taken their boat out. We had to go down and say hi, and when we arrived we saw that the anglers he was talking to had three nice hatchery steelhead. The lucky fishermen were from Chelan, and started out very early that morning, anchored near the bridge. The photo you see with this week's column is of Jerry McKinney with their catch.

We continued downstream and I made a few casts from the rip rap above Wells Dam. No luck. I had noticed that there were quite a few rigs parked on the road where you walk to the fishing grounds here on the way up north. They had all left by the time we got there, so I don't know how the fishing was that morning.

I tried fishing below Wells, along the bar there, but found conditions difficult. The water was extremely low, and there was just no flow at all. When I cast out my bobber it was moving upstream with the breeze. I had never had this happen here before. We made short stops at Entiat and above Rocky Reach Dam to complete our tour.



The good news is that all the experienced anglers we talked to agreed that there were good numbers of steelhead in excellent condition in the river, and the best fishing of the season is about to begin!

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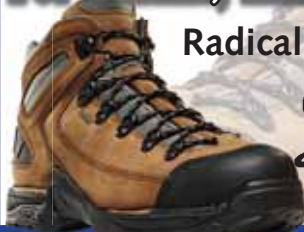
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