

The Fishin' Magician

Welcoming

Dave Graybill

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This was a busy fishing week for me. I managed to get out and fish three different popular winter fisheries here in Central Washington. I was on Moses Lake, ice fishing for perch on Wednesday.

I traveled to Rocky Ford and fly fished for big rainbow on Friday. I spent Sunday as the guest of Darrell and Dads Family Guide Service, along with a crew of anglers, fishing for triploid rainbow trout.

Someone I met while fishing at the Coulee City Marina for perch told me that he would let me know when the ice was safe at Moses Lake. True to his word, Travis gave me a call and a report that the "jumbo" perch were biting down there. I had a meeting in Quincy on Wednesday, and after that was over I beat it down to Moses and found him waiting for me.

He had been busy. He and his fishing buddy had a bucket full of fat perch, and a few legal walleye. Just as I arrived his rod tip went down and he pulled a perch through the hole that measured 13 1/2 inches. This just confirmed what he had told me. This was solid evidence that his reports were accurate. He and his friend Cliff continued to catch fish while I drilled my hole and fiddled around with my gear. I spent more time taking photos of them pulling fish through the ice than fishing myself, and it was really fun.

They were a couple hundred yards just north of the I-90 Bridge and there was close to 25 feet of water under the ice in this spot. His favorite bait was either perch eyes or perch meat attached to a micro jig. A variety of them were working when the bite was on, which starts about 8:30 a.m. for him. Travis says the bite is typically very good until about

noon and then tapers off and is very slow by mid afternoon. I would recommend anyone that would like to catch their 25-fish limit of fat perch make a trip to Moses Lake.

On Friday, Brian Anantatmula and I set off for Rocky Ford. It was chilly but wind wasn't a problem when we arrived early that morning. The action was pretty cool as well. We had started below the upper bridge and had worked our way down to just below the middle parking lot without much success. He had lost one and I had landed one by the time we took a late lunch break. We had tried a variety of methods, too, but scuds under an indicator seemed to be the only thing the fish would take.

Things changed about 2:30. We noticed an angler on the far bank had finally begun hooking some fish, and I had a dandy on. The fish took my scud and headed up stream. It took me into my backing, dove into some weeds and pulled free of the hook. Brian had been watching some big fish feeding just below the boulder strewn bend in the Ford, and wanted to see if they would take my scud.

We could see these big fish laying among the big rocks and feeding on something, and I'll be darned if one of them didn't come up and take my fly. It must have been a good one because it broke

me off on the strike! When I walked back to my bag to retrieve I heard a shout, and could see that Brian was into a good fish. It drug him down stream well below the bend, and when he was finally able to get it close to shore I discovered that my capture net was too small. The opening on my net is 22 inches and it is a miracle that I was able to scoop the monster into it. The fish was over 25 inches for sure, maybe 27. It wasn't the hottest fishing trip to Rocky Ford, but that rainbow sure made our day.

I got an e-mail from Anton Jones, Darrell and Dads Family Guide Service, on Friday, asking if I would want to jump on board his boat on Sunday.

He was taking a group to Rufus Woods, but I was welcome to come along and see what the fishing was like near the net pens. I fired right back that I would meet him at the ramp!

Andy Byrd, who runs trips with Darrell and Dads, skipped the boat and it was beautiful, smooth run to the pens. I was surprised to see just one other boat there. With the good weather I figured that there would be a number of boats tied up near the lower pens. Maybe that was a sign.

Fishing was pretty slow. The slowest that Jones had experienced in this spot. That doesn't mean we didn't catch fish, it was just a long time between them. Given the conditions and number of anglers on board, it was determined that this was a slip sinker and dough bait kind of day. It did work, too. There was just enough current at times to get the fish in a biting mood, but it made setting the hook tough. We missed a bunch of strikes, and even broke off one nice fish.

We did finish the day with four triploids in the box. Three were cookie cutter 3-pounders, with a couple of them sporting the Colville Tribal green spaghetti tags. The other was a fat 9-pounder that gave Dean Peer quite a tussle on six-pound test. It's fish like this one that keeps me eager to get back to Rufus Woods this time of year.

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