

# Welcoming **Dave Graybill** To The **Nickel Ads** *Classifieds* The Fishin' Magician

Sure, I know opening weekend of trout season is coming up in a couple of days. I will talk about some of the better prospects for the weekend before I sign off, but I have to share a recent experience. This is something that kokanee anglers will enjoy. Every spring I anxiously await for the kokanee fisheries to get into gear in our region. One of the first is at Lake Chelan, by late April or early May. Well, thanks to Jerrod Gibbons, of Upper Columbia Guide Services I got a chance to fish for kokanee in mid-April, the earliest I have ever caught a kokanee in Central Washington.

I had heard that Palmer had been good for a couple of weeks and sure wanted to get up there, so when Gibbons called and invited my wife Eileen and me to come up, I dropped everything to go. I knew that the Palmer Lake kokanee fishery had to be something special to get Gibbons to take time away from his turkey scouting. He has a whole bunch of people lined up for turkey hunts this spring.

When we launched the boat and began rigging the rods, the rain we had driven through all morning stopped and we fished without the need for rain gear. It didn't take long to set up three rods. The two rods I brought along were both just 7 1/2-footers, but built for kokanee. They have a very slow action to help absorb the shock of a fighting fish, and to avoid tearing the hooks out of the soft mouths of kokanee. One was rigged with a set of Macks Lure Flash Lites

with a Wedding Ring spinner and the other with a small trout dodger and a Super Duper lure. Gibbons put his light action spinner rod out with a Macks Lure Hot Wings trailed by a Kokanee Pro. The lures were baited with white, shoe peg corn or a corn and worm combo. Two rods were attached to the downriggers, and one I long-lined out the back.

We tried the area near the boat launch, and although we were marking a bunch of fish, but were getting no strikes. We pulled up, moved to a point at about mid way up the lake, and when the clock struck 1 o'clock, things changed. All of a sudden the kokanee were interested in what we were offering. The long-line rod went off first, and actually went off a lot. In about 40 minutes we landed six kokanee. Four were on the trout dodger and Super Duper rig run out the back of the boat, and two came on Gibbons Hot Wing and Kokanee Pro set up. The other rigger rod was quiet the whole time.

We called it quits at 2 o'clock, so Gibbons could get back to preparing for his turkey hunts. We were plenty happy with what we had in the cooler. There were six kokanee that were all within a half-inch of each other in length, and the length was 15 inches. These were beautiful, fat kokanee, each one a meal.

I would sure like to get back to Palmer this spring. Gibbons told me that last year, while on a bassing fishing trip in May, he saw fish roll-

ing and tied on a Rattle Rap and cast to them. Wham! It turned out that they were kokanee getting ready to spawn and they hit anything that landed near them. There is still some good kokanee fishing ahead.

Of course there are a bunch of lakes nearby that are worth a visit, too. Forde and Conner lakes are just down the road and known for excellent brook trout fishing. Blue Lake, just a bit further down the valley is a great fly fishing lake for rainbow and brown trout. Up the hill is Chopaka, a famous lake for fly fishing for big rainbow. It was rehabilitated a couple of years ago and was fishing great last fall. Spectacle Lake is several miles down the valley toward

Tonasket, and should be good this spring. Okanogan County is always loaded with good lakes. The Conconully lakes each got a plant of 10,000 rainbow this year and the holdovers will be huge this season.

In Grant County Blue and Park lakes, north of Soap Lake, should be terrific. Each lake got well over 100,000 fry and the growth rate at these two lakes is amazing. There will be lots of 12-inch or larger yearlings available and many carryovers of 15 inches taken at these two. Often overlooked are Perch and Vic Meyers. They are small lakes but produce great catches of rainbow on opening weekend year after year.

In Douglas County, Jameson is always a great producer on the opener. In spite of algae blooms the last couple of years, the fish are still fat and healthy; at least they were when I fished it last fall. Wapato Lake will be a favorite in Chelan County again this year, and I expect a lot of happy anglers at Fish Lake, near Lake Wenatchee. I don't think that the planting trucks were able to make it up to Beehive, Clear Lilly or Black Lake yet, but check with the Department of Fish and Wildlife office on the Chelan Highway to be sure.

I hope your families have a safe, fun and successful opening weekend. Fish on!

Reach Dave at:  
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