

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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This was a week of good news and bad news, but I did get out fishing again in the Bridgeport area. I was able to complete half of my plan for the day, which was to try for steelhead in the morning and then fish for trout on Rufus Woods in the afternoon. I got half the job done.

The only place that I have been able to catch steelhead this year, other than the Methow, has been at Bridgeport, so last week Jim Passage, Dennis Broughton and I made the trip to the city marina there and dumped the boat in. There were just two other boats in the water here, and they were both fishing above the launch. So we headed down stream and I set the boat up for a drift off the Blow Hole.

It was maybe our second drift at the outflow of the Colville Hatchery that my bobber made a couple of dips and then was tugged below the surface. I set the hook and reeled in a nice wild steelhead of about 7 pounds. We carefully released the fish and went back to work. A little later, when we were working further down in the drift, Broughton's bobber went down, and he pulled another wild steelhead to the boat. When we released this fish I was celebrating. We had two fish to the boat already, and that was as good as I've done up here for a full day this season.

I ran up to the bridge to give this drift a try, and there was a boat below me, acting funny. It was running a zig zag pattern off the rocks along here. When I drifted down to them I found out it was a Department of Fish and Wildlife boat doing an underwater camera survey of the Chinook spawning beds. There are a few in this area. We worked our



way around them and made a few passes here, but never got a bump. This stretch is usually good for at least a couple of triploids, but not that day.

Our next stop was the point above the big blue pump, and conditions were great for bobber and jig casting here. Everything was just right for fishing, and all we needed was hungry steelhead. We didn't find any. Passage did get a nice triploid that we released, but that was it.

The plan was to spend part of our day on Rufus Woods. I have had some fairly good reports from this area for trout and wanted to try it myself. We pulled off the water at Bridgeport around 12:30 and pulled the boat up to the Corps of Engineers launch above the dam. There was just truck

and trailer in the parking area when we got there and they were just pulling their boat. I walked down to see how they did and learned that they had hooked a couple of 5- or 6-pound fish earlier in the day, but when the wind came up it was just too difficult to control their boat for trolling. It was blowing, too; hard enough that we chose not to put the boat in and headed home. We had a morning, though, with two bright steelhead to the boat.

What got me motivated to try Rufus Woods was a conversation I had with Jill Phillips, manager of the Tribal Hatchery. Jill had some good news for me. She told me that, according to their fish checkers, the fishing had picked up on Rufus recently. More fish in the 3-pound class and even larger had been showing up, including one that weighed 18 pounds. She also told me that the tribe had released 69,000 triploids through June of this year. All of the fish they release are adipose fin clipped, by the way. Their contribution to the fishery is accounting for better catches, now that the water has cooled, and I plan to get up there as soon as I can.

I got some bad news later in the week. This past week we lost Gordon Steinmetz, a prominent figure in sport fishing in our region. Steinmetz and his wife Marge owned and operated Big Wally's in Coulee City for many years. He also was a walleye guide and tournament angler, participating in many of the major tournaments in our region. Steinmetz established the Big Wally's Spring Classic Walleye Tournament that still goes on every year

in mid May. There was always a full house when he gave seminars at the sport shows throughout the state, and was always willing to share what he knew about walleye fishing on our waters. I was fortunate to have fished with Gordon on Lake Roosevelt and Marge prepared a rib dinner for us that I will always remember. He was a good friend to countless walleye anglers and dedicated much of his time to issues that affected Banks Lake and other sport fishing waters in our region. He will be missed.

I just met with my travel partners at Journey Travel and Tours and we have the dates for the next trip to Belize. This will be my fourth trip to Ambergris Caye, and the reason I keep going back is that I have a blast every time I go. Last year my wife, Eileen, and I took eight people along and everyone enjoyed the experience. We will be staying at the Belizean Shores Resort again, as everyone loved the place. The same folks at Go Fish Belize will be providing the guide services, as they continue to a great job. The trip is structured a little differently than last year, adding another free day for people to enjoy the area on their own. Once more I have planned the trip for the ideal time for the best fishing for bonefish, tarpon and permit. We will be leaving on the 22nd of May and returning on the 31st. If you have ever considered visiting Belize and try the fishing and other activities it offers, this would be a great way to do it. If you want to learn more about the trip, contact Sandy at Journey Travel Tours toll free at 1-877-335-1153.

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