

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

We've had a lot of wet but actually pretty mild weather in the region. Anglers that like to chase steelhead have had good conditions for it. The announcement of the closure of the steelhead seasons on several of our rivers here in Central Washington wasn't as severe as anticipated. I will provide the details of the closures and share my experiences on the water in this column. There is still a lot of water open to fishing. I am continuing to do my duty to remove as many hatchery fish from our rivers as possible.



missed some hits, too, of course, and it turned out to be a busy day. We released a couple of fish that were in the 12- to 13-pound class. What a great day!

On Friday I returned to Pateros with my buddy Rollie Schmitt and we launched Barb's boat at the launch just above the bridges. We knew this would be our last chance to fish the estuary and started right there. I was very slow, though. We tried casting our bobbers near the buoy where the river makes its turn and got no action. We tried further up the estuary off the rocky points with the same result. We both agreed it was time to hit the Rocks.

Things were looking good when we got to Wells, too. The water was up but not running too fast. We made a couple of very long drifts along the bar and down around the corner, and Schmitt had a good take down and had the fish on for a short time. We were getting nervous though. We still didn't have a fish to the net and we only had a couple more hours to fish. The end of our steelhead success streak was looking near.

We weren't going to give up without trying one more spot. We ran across the river to the big eddy and began looking for a decent drift. We finally wound up starting at the bottom of the eddy and actually drifting up stream. We had both changed our Maxi-Jigs. Schmitt tied on his favorite peach color, and I tried a bright pink. The drift was weird, but it worked. Schmitt's bobber took a dive and he brought a nice wild fish to the boat for release. Not five minutes later my bobber went down and after a very good battle I had a 9-pound hatchery fish in the net. Whew. We did it again. We made another short drift, but it was starting to get dark, so we headed for the ramp.

We've had some slow starts to our steelhead days, but we're planning another steelhead trip for early next week. We just know it's going to be hot right off the bat!

Steelhead fishing has ended on several rivers in our region on December 1st, but the closure isn't as broad as I was being told earlier this year. The Wenatchee, Entiat and Methow rivers have closed, not only for steelhead fishing but for whitefish as well. The areas that will remain open to fishing for hatchery steelhead include: the main stem Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to the boundary markers below Wells Dam, and from Highway 173 Bridge in Brewster to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam; the Okanogan River from the mouth upstream to the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville; the Similkameen River from the mouth upstream to 400 feet below Enloe Dam. Only adipose fin clipped steelhead may be retained, with a limit of two fish per day. A night closure remains in effect and selective gear rules apply, except bait is allowed in the main stem Columbia. Anglers are reminded that these fisheries are made possible by the Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Stamp. For full details see the news release available on the WDFW web site.

I had two opportunities to fish for steelhead last week. Both started off with a trip to Pateros. On Tuesday I jumped on board Shane Magnuson's boat. He had two clients that I had fished with before at Drano Lake and at Pateros, and his buddy Wally, who I have also fished with on several occasions. They had really romped on them the day before, limiting and were back at the dock by noon. Fishing wasn't quite as fast on this day. The Rocks produced some fish but our first visit to the estuary produced zero. After a short break we headed back down to the Rocks and found a faster bite. In fact at one point we had on a triple! That just doesn't happen that often with steelhead and we landed them all. We made one more visit to the estuary and did get one fish this time. At the end of the day we had tallied ten fish to the boat, three being keepers. We lost a few and

When we arrived there were two boats drifting this popular area. We got in line and started out drifts. The conditions were very good. We had a nice down river drift. The stage was set for great fishing. There was something missing though. Steelhead were ignoring our offerings. We made several passes here and Schmitt had one good hit and I blanked. We made a couple of passes through a spot on the other side of the river with the same result. It was time to head up to the Rivers Restaurant for a bowl of chowder and regroup. We decided that since we hadn't fished below Wells Dam this year it would be a good time to try it. We weren't too excited about heading back to the water that produced nothing for us so far that day, and we have had some good times fishing bobbers and jigs below Wells.

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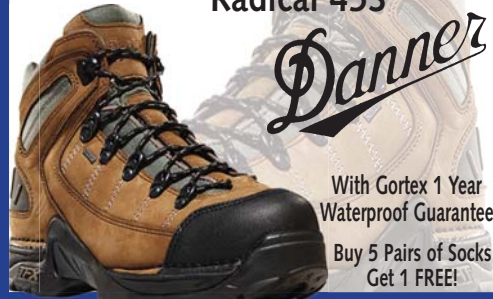
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