



Welcoming
Dave Graybill
To The
Nickel Ads
Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

The big news is that the Wenatchee, Icicle and Methow rivers have reopened to steelhead fishing. Anglers should expect very good fishing on these streams. The season is set to run through the end of March, but could end early, depending on the number of wild fish caught and released. I had some experience with steelhead fishing this past week. I caught fish on the Okanogan River, and of all places the Yakima River.

Jerrold Gibbons, of Okanogan Valley Guide Service, and I had been trying to get out on the Okanogan River after the ice came off. Although the forecast that day was for some wet weather we decided to go for it. His father Tom joined us and we put the boat in at the rough launch above the mouth and headed up stream. It took us no time at all to get to the Trestle Hole, about a five mile run in the jet sled. Navigating the shallow Okanogan in the sled was easy. We worked our bobbers and jigs through the hole without even a sniff, so we kept making our way up the river

Before I knew it we had run up the Okanogan as far as what is known as Rattlesnake, which is a good distance from the launch. Rattlesnake is positioned below a bend in the river and there are a few boulders scattered off the shore that hold steelhead. We started at the top of the hole when it really started snowing seriously. We had a couple of suspicious looking bumps, but nothing that would take the bobber down.

Gibbons backed the boat down through



the hole and he hooked but lost a fish in the lower section. I had been allowing my bobber to slide way down below the boat, and when it was at the extreme end of the drift my bobber disappeared. I don't know how but I set the hook and worked a small hatchery hen up to the net. We made a couple more casts but decided that the weather had put the fish off the bite, and it was snowing fiercely by now.

The run back to the launch was brutal. We took turns running the boat. Gibbons would go as long as he could before he just couldn't see anymore due the stinging snow in his eyes. I would take over and run until he couldn't see my eyes through my glasses, as they were coated with snow and ice. We finally made it back to launch and celebrated at least not getting skunked in such adverse conditions. Admitting that we were sure some crazy steelhead anglers, we hopped into our

warming trucks and headed home.

The next day I had a trip scheduled with Johnny Boitano, of the Troutwater Fly Shop and Guide Service in Ellensburg. I was reluctant as the forecast again was for wet weather and even worse, high winds. Boitano assured me that there were areas that we could avoid the wind. He and his brother Jason and I jumped into one drift boat and Ted Truglio, TJ and Devon Zanolli hopped into another to join us on the float.

To our surprise the day had broken mostly clear and sunny, and the "W" (you don't say wind out loud), wasn't a factor at all. Johnny Boitano took the oars while Jason took the position in the back end of the boat. These guys knew every pocket and eddy that held fish, and while I missed fish after fish, Jason landed a bunch of trout. The first fish he landed was a cutthroat of at least 15 inches and he caught a couple of big whitefish and rainbow that ranged in size from 13 to 16 inches.

Johnny was busy. When he wasn't rowing he was re-rigging my set up. He changed depths constantly and just as often replaced the flies. He experimented with a variety of Skwala Stones and droppers that varied from small nymphs to San Juan Worms of their own design. We caught fish on the stones, including a new one that Jason had created, and the San Juan Worms really worked well, too.

I had a Skwala Stone with a San Juan Worm in my line, below a large indicator when we started down a long straight run. We hadn't gone very far down this stretch when my indicator shot out of sight. Johnny and Jason were yelling and I managed to set the hook this time. It only took a couple of seconds to realize that I had hooked a steelhead! I was using a 5 weight rod with a 5-pound tippet and this fish was having its way with me. While my knees were knocking Boitano first anchored and then pulled up and chased the fish further down stream. Somehow I managed to get the fish close enough to the boat so Johnny was able to slide the knotless net under it. We all celebrated after releasing the wild fish that had made its way over Rosa Dam into this area of the Yakima.

We continued down stream, pushing the boat over a log jam at one point and caught many more rainbow, even one that gave Jason a real tussle and turned out to be an 18-incher. This day was just further proof that the early spring fishing on the Yakima can be spectacular. It made for a great TV Show that you all can watch in a couple of weeks.

My next stop will be in the Northport area of the Columbia, near the Canadian Border. Here I will be fishing for walleye and big rainbow and cutthroat. Man, I am having some great fishing and it's only going to get better!

Reach Dave at: www.FishingMagician.com or Fishboy@nwi.net

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