

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

I am getting good reports of fishing for a mix of fish on the Wenatchee River. Anglers are taking everything from summer-run kings to coho and steelhead. All of these fish are available further up the river, but all three species are being taken near the mouth. I have opted to focus on steelhead elsewhere and this is what my experience has been like in this early season.

I made a trip to the upper Columbia last Thursday with my fishing buddy Rollie Schmitten. We had a glowing report on the steelhead action at Wells Dam and we decided to give it a try. We have had success here before, and in fact I caught one the biggest steelhead I have ever taken on the main stem Columbia (about 15 pounds) at Wells last season in September.

We immediately ran across the river to the spot that produced this dandy last season, and went to work with our bobbers and jigs. Much to our surprise we only got a couple of light hits and I had a fish on briefly. I didn't get a look at it so it could have even been a triploid, which are caught on occasion below Wells.

We hopped across the river and worked the bar. Drifting down the bar, casting bobbers and jigs is typically a very good producer of steelhead at Wells. The flow was pretty fast and we were swept down river at a good clip. That doesn't mean that if fish were there they wouldn't have gotten a look at our jigs. We made this trip a couple of times and even drifted way down around the corner and below the bar, where I have caught many



fish in the past. Not on this day, however. We ran back up and tried a short drift against the bank on the shore opposite the launch and did zip. We had given Wells close to two hours and if there were fish there we would have found them, I figured, and suggested we pull out and head for Bridgeport. Schmitten gladly agreed. We were bound and determined to get some fish.

We dropped the boat in at the city park at Bridgeport and ran up near the bridge. There are people fishing from shore here now, and although there is plenty of water below where they are fishing, we still couldn't get a hit. This hole has been a real disappointment to me this season. Maybe when more fish settle into this stretch it will get better again.

When we crossed over to the other side things got slightly better, but we really started having fun when we dropped further down stream and started fishing near the hatchery. We finally started to get some serious action. Schmitten had five fish in pretty short order, but not the kind we were looking for, they were triploids. We took a good number of these and missed a bunch of hits, and I finally got a steelhead on. It turned out to be a keeper, too. We continued to work this bank and continued to catch fish, but we went home with just the one keeper for the day.

The next day I took the Ananattmala family out for a day of fishing, to celebrate Brian's son Josh's birthday. He turned six. We were joined by his mother, Linda and father Mo, who shares a birthday with me, November 5th.

After my experience the previous day, I chose to go right back to Bridgeport. We started out down by the hatchery, but there was another boat in this drift. There was no reason for both of us to work the same water, so I ran up where we could have a drift to ourselves. It was a good decision. We got lots of hits along here and caught several nice triploids. Josh got to reel in some fish, with the help of his grandparents and Dad, before we released them, for his birthday.

We worked this upper bank for a number of drifts and missed hits and caught fish the whole time were there. We bounced down to the lower banks, which we had to ourselves now and got some more fish, but the action wasn't as fast as up above.

Linda Ananattmala had the hot rod. She admitted that she hadn't been fishing for a while, but got onto drifting her bobber and jig pretty quickly. Her bobber when down more often than anyone else's and she landed some really nice triploids, and the only keeper steelhead of the day! We had so many hits on this particular day that I actually ran out of bait. I had over four dozen on the boat, too.

We took a break and had a fabulous shore lunch, and made a few more drifts before calling it a day. It was a great day, too. They all caught and released some triploids, and they had a nice steelhead to take home for dinner. I am sure that Linda Ananattmala isn't going to let the "boys" forget about the day she out-fished them anytime soon.

I hope to get down to Vernita this week, before the season closes on this stretch of the Columbia. I hear that the fall run kings are really on the bite. I also hear that most of them are pretty near spawning condition already, too. Oh, well. It's fun to do battle with these big kings anyway.

I am not going to give up on fishing for steelhead at Wells Dam. It has treated me pretty good over the years. My wife wants to go steelhead fishing again early in the week. Guess where I am going to take her!

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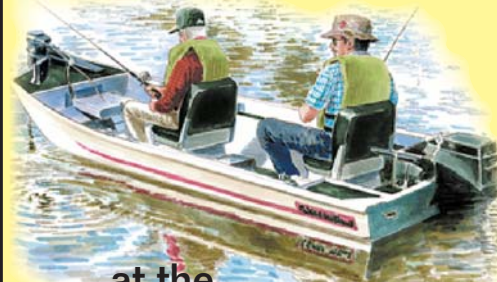


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