

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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I had another great week, with some very good fishing here in Central Washington. The walleye fishing on Potholes Reservoir has been outstanding this year and it continues to provide limit fishing. We got a great Fishing TV Show done on the fishing here. Later in the week I was able to cross Coffee Pot Lake off my list of places that I have always wanted to fish. This trip confirmed what I had heard about the lake.

Eric Granstrom and I couldn't have planned a trip to Potholes at a better time. The weather was calm and clear and we had high hopes for a good day of walleye fishing. Guide Mark Olson, of Mark Olson Guide Service, met us at the Mar Don dock in the morning and he said he had been having great fishing here this spring. The walleye were really "snapping" as he likes to say.

We left the dock and headed in the direction of Crab Creek, at the top edge of the reservoir. We actually began fishing a fair distance below where Crab Creek enters the lake. Olson rigged up three rods, all with the same basic set up, which was a Smile Blade and a Slow Death Hook. The hook was baited with about half a nightcrawler. The Smile Blade turns at a very slow speed and adds attraction to the bait, and the Slow Death Hook causes the nightcrawler to spin through the water.

Olson boated a walleye close to 20 inches right away, and I got a smaller one immediately. The bite was on and it didn't slow down much the whole time we were out there. Granstrom was in the bow with the video camera and he repeatedly had to drop the camera and grab his rod. All three of us were busy reeling in walleye all morning.



We did move further up into the mouth of Crab Creek to see what was going on there, and continued to catch nice fish. There were clouds of small midges in the air around us, but they didn't stop us. We limited in just over two hours of fishing and only threw back one smaller fish. Olson's first fish was still the largest of the day, but the average size of what we had in the live well was between 1 1/2 to 2 pounds. That's a lot of great filets.

Mike Meseberg, owner of Mar Don Resort, put Granstrom and I up the night before in one of their cabins that faces the lake, and these units are really nice! I told him I kind of felt out of place in the comforts they offered for an angler like myself. We got a chance to visit with him before we headed home and he reminded us that over the past several years there have been over 1,500 structures placed in Potholes. The work has all been done by volunteers and funded by a wide range of companies and individuals.

These structures have provided a place for the young fish to hide from predators and the results are apparent.

If you would like to get more details on Mark Olson's fishing techniques and see what our day with him was like, visit the Fishing TV Page on my web site and click on Potholes Walleye Fishing. The show is fun to watch and informative as well.

If you have ever seen the lists of places that I would like to fish in the Columbia Basin Herald or my E-Letter, you have seen Coffee Pot Lake mentioned more than once. This lake is known for very good trout fishing, but I know folks that go there just for the perch and crappie fishing. I have learned that the largemouth bass fishing can be great at times, too.

Thanks to Dennis Beich, retired Director of Region 2 for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, I finally made it to Coffee Pot. I met him at his place in Marlin, which is a few miles past Wilson Creek on Highway 28. We towed his boat on through the town of Odessa where we took Highway 21 north. We traveled this highway until we hit Coffee Pot Road that leads to the lake. I was surprised to find the small camping area and parking lot full of rigs. It was obvious that Coffee Pot is popular with fly fishers.

I had been experimenting with different lures and flies as we went along, and had put out an Apex with a single barbless siwash hook behind a dodger. When we got to the top end of the lake and started trolling across that rod bent double and line was screaming off the reel. We got the fish to the net and put a tape to it and found it to be 20 inches!

We got two more fish over 16 inches in this same area and lost another big one heading down the lake. The wind came up so we packed it in, even though we were still catching small rainbow.

There is an event coming up that salmon anglers throughout Central Washington will want to attend. Called the Salmon Summit it will be a very broad educational evening covering everything from the status of the fish passage at Wanapum and Rock Island dams, to the forecasts of the returns of salmon to the Upper Columbia this year and into the future. Organized by the Icicle Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, invitations to provide presentations have been sent out to a long list of state and federal agencies as well as salmon recovery groups and others that contribute to the enhancement of salmon fishing in our region. The Salmon Summit will take place on Tuesday, May 13th at the Chelan County PUD Auditorium on Wenatchee Avenue. It is scheduled to begin at 6:30 and could run until 9:30 in order to accommodate the number of speakers that will have input that evening. So mark your calendars and plan to attend this highly informative evening dedicated to topic of salmon in the Upper Columbia. I will be there with a presentation on the economic impact of salmon and steelhead fishing in our region, so I hope to see you there, too.

Now I am headed to the Columbia River Gorge to go springer fishing. Yahoo!

Reach Dave at:
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