

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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Having put my quest for walleye on Moses Lake behind me, I checked out the smallmouth bass fishing on a couple of the more popular waters here in Central Washington. I made a trip to Lake Chelan to shoot a Fishing TV Show for my web site, and the next day hit Banks Lake. I found smallmouth in good numbers in both lakes, and had a blast catching them.

I had planned the trip to Chelan a couple of months ago, when I ran into Kim Skaar, a real estate agent and active Lake Chelan Bass Club member, at Hooked on Toys. We made a date to do a Fishing TV Show on smallmouth fishing on Lake Chelan then and there. We decided to go on June 5th, a few days after the annual bass tournament the club runs every year. He figured that this would be a good time to show me how to fish for smallmouth when they are on the beds.

Eric Granstrom and I met Skaar at the Mill Bay Boat ramp and didn't have to go far to find fish. We had very good conditions first thing in the morning and got a few fish to take our baits when we put them in their beds. The fish were all males, and were all 2 pounds or bigger. Fishing became more difficult as the overcast sky and breeze made visibility less than ideal for spotting beds and seeing if fish were on them. We tried several other spots trying to find areas where the wind wasn't cluttering up our view of what was on the bottom. Later in the day the breeze died and the sun came out and we were back in business. It was game on again as we spotted bass on their beds and teased them into striking our lures.

If you haven't had the experience of catching and releasing smallmouth bass when they



are sticking to their beds it is great fun. Some of the fish would hit the first lure that invaded their territory, while others would aggressively hit the third lure we put in the sweet spot. We mostly fished drop shot rigs or football-shaped lead head jigs to tempt the bass into striking. We were using 7-foot spinning rods and spinning reels that Skaar had loaded with fluorocarbon line.

Skaar mentioned that the water temperature in Lake Chelan is still cooler than usual for this time of year. Smallmouth have moved up and were staging on beds when we had the hot weather earlier, but when it got cool again they were put off. The big females are just now starting to show up as we get these summer-like days. Good sight fishing for smallmouth, and the larger females is just getting starting on Lake Chelan.

The next day Granstrom and I met Jeff Bryant at the Northrup launch on Banks Lake. It

wanted to see if we could get some walleye early and then fish for smallmouth, which is my favorite thing to do on Banks. We headed straight across the lake, passed Steamboat Rock and onto Barker Flats. I was looking for a specific piece of water, not far from the boat ramp at Barker, and it was obvious when we found it. We started getting bites on our spinner and worm rigs almost immediately. We were getting "short-hit" terribly, though, and pulled in rig after rig with half a worm on it. We went through two dozen worms in about an hour and a half, but only hooked two small walleye. I had had enough of this. It appeared we had landed on a big school of juveniles and we left the area. I did spend a little time near Steamboat trolling for walleye again, but just had our bait picked a couple of times. Frustrated, I was ready to go smallmouth fishing and everyone agreed.

I rigged Granstrom and Bryant with spinning rods and put Senkos on the hooks. I put a Chigger Crawl on my bait caster and we went to work. Granstrom and Bryant started catching smallmouth, and I couldn't get a bite. I switched to a lizard and was still just watching them catch fish. When I finally went to my favorite small green lizard with a small bullet head weight, things changed for me. I have always had good success with this set up on Banks, and once again it was a winner. We all started fishing with this rig and were having a ball. We fished the shoreline south of Barker Flats, and then ran across to fish the boulder field along the shore opposite the Haystack Rock. Most of the smallmouth were 1 to 2 pounds, and we missed a ton of hits.

Don't forget, Fathers Day is coming up

this weekend. One option to consider for spending some quality time with Dad is to enter the Annual East Wenatchee Rotary Club Pikeminnow Derby. This is the 21st year for this popular derby, and those who have fished in it come back year after year. It is not only fun, but there is over \$10,000.00 in cash and prizes that will be handed out. You can pick up a brochure with all the details and buy your tickets at Bob Feil Boats and Motors and Bi-Mart in East Wenatchee, and at Hooked on Toys in Wenatchee.

If you look at the dam counts you will see that the summer-run salmon are starting to hit Bonneville Dam at over 2,000 a day. It won't be long before they start showing up in the upper Columbia and should be there in great numbers when the season opens on July 1st. You can get ready for the season by attending the free seminar at Town Ford on Wednesday, June 19th. Shane Magnuson, Upper Columbia Guide Service, will be there to give salmon anglers valuable tips on how to successfully fish for summer-run salmon.

He doesn't hold anything back, and if you want to catch more fish this season, don't miss his talk. Also appearing the same evening will be Ron Oules, of Reel Lentless Guide Service. He will show anglers the methods he uses to catch sockeye. Sockeye are also starting to move up the river and although we will see fewer of them in the Columbia, a very good season is forecast for Lake Wenatchee. The seminar will begin at 6 p.m. on Wednesday evening.

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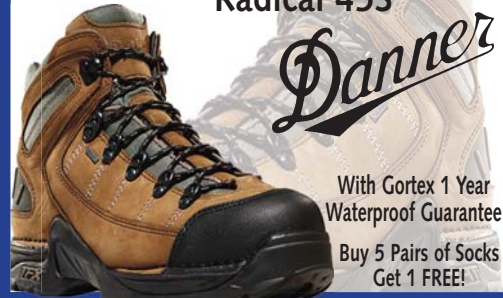
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