

# Dave Graybill

## The Fishin' Magician

Nickel Ads  
Nickel Saver  
Nickel NIK  
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What a week. Getting up well before the crack of dawn to get to Lake Wenatchee to fish for sockeye salmon every morning. Well not every morning. I did fish three days in a row before taking a break. It was a great time, that's for sure.

I actually started the week at Fish Lake. Every year the Icicle Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited and folks with the Upper Valley Connection meet at the Cove Resort for a morning of fishing with special needs kids. The event was started when Whitney West, daughter of Scott and Nadine West, owners of the Cove Resort came up with the idea of treating these kids to a day of fishing for her senior project at Cascade High School. Her family jumped right in providing their pontoon boats at times, or opens their dock to the kids, their parents and care takers and the volunteers from TU. They even provide a lunch of hot dogs and burgers, potato salad and other treats when we are done fishing. The event has been going on for six or seven years now, and everyone that participates is eager for the next one. It is as much fun for the volunteers as it is for kids. Fishing from the dock this year was exciting. There were the usual perch being caught and then some real commotion as a rod was bent near double with a huge triploid rainbow on the end of the line. In the two hours or so that we fished there were three of these big fish hooked. The kids loved it. I have to thank the West family for keeping up the tradition that their daughter Whitney started, and to



the guys from Trout Unlimited for always showing up in force to make sure the kids have a great time.

Last Thursday morning was the first day that Lake Wenatchee was opened to fishing for sockeye. Whether we would have a season at all was in question. With the low flows and high water temperatures the fish were hanging out in the cooler Columbia River. We just got enough cool nights to get the needed fish to the lake. At least 23,000 sockeye must pass over Tumwater Dam for spawning escapement, and over 30,000 had passed over the dam, which allowed for a harvest of 7,000. Anglers that turned out for the opening day had very good success. Of the 88 boats counted over 90 percent of the people on board them got their limit of sockeye.

I had Mike McKee, of Mike's Meats and Dan Carr of Visconti's Restaurants with me on the first morning. We left the dock at

about 5:30 and were back by 7 with our dozen fish. We had at least three doubles and didn't lose any fish either. We weren't alone with this kind of action. Nets were out all around us the whole time we were on the water. It was a fishing party. People figured out early on that the fish were unusually deep for the opening of the season. I remember when I first started fishing here that we would start at 20 feet and go deeper as the day brightened. This year we started at 60 to 70 feet deep and went even deeper later in the day. I had finished fishing at the Brewster Pool for sockeye with a three-hook rig, and these served me well on Lake Wenatchee. I tie three red hooks about an inch apart, and I add three small glow beads between the bottom two hooks. I either pinch the barbs or buy size 1 barbless hooks in red.

The second day I was joined by Brian Anatatmula and his 9-year-old son Josh. Also along was Casey Baldwin, who is the senior research scientist with the Colville Fish and Wildlife Department. We made sure that Josh got his limit of sockeye first and his Dad had his shortly after. We dropped them off at the dock just after 8 o'clock and Casey and I went back out. We found a good bite near Glacier Peak Campground, but took short break to tow a boat to shore. We went back out and soon had finished our limits, too.

The third day Brian Nielson, of BJ's Guide

Service and his friend Jim Burnside came up from Moses Lake. We got off to a rough start. When the fish started biting we had trouble getting them in the boat. We lost at least four, but regrouped and rededicated ourselves to the task at hand and had much better success. I am not saying that we hooked every fish that bounced our riggers, but we did get our limits. It just took us a little longer that's all. Nielson had fished with me on the Brewster Pool and I had my best day ever up there and it was his first day of sockeye fishing ever. Jim had never fished for sockeye and now he's hooked.

Monday will be my last day. I have to get back to work on various things but I sure had a blast this sockeye season on Lake Wenatchee. I really have to thank my good friend Rollie Schmitt for allowing me to tie the Kingfisher 2025 to his dock and greeting me each morning with coffee and fresh muffins for everyone. Sockeye season is a sacred event at the Schmitt household and he has taught me all his tricks for catching these prized fish.

Sockeye season is over for me, but while fishing with Brian Nielson I learned that the walleye fishing is still fantastic on Potholes Reservoir. The number of big fish being caught is amazing, too. I am very eager to get down there and get some of these myself!

Reach Dave at:  
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