

Dave Graybill

The Fishin' Magician

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This week we saw the close of the sockeye in our region, but the good fishing for summer-run Chinook salmon continues. I spent a day on the water with two Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officers last Saturday. I saw a lot of big walleye in live wells and coolers of the boats that we checked. I am looking forward to seeing the results of the Brewster Salmon Derby, coming up this weekend.

I got two trips to the Brewster Pool in before the season closed. My success had been building with each trip. On last Wednesday, I had Brian Nielson, of BJs Guide Service along. He had done me the favor of taking me out walleye fishing on Potholes Reservoir this spring, and he had never been sockeye fishing. I was surprised to see a drop in the number of boats that were fishing off the mouth of the Okanogan River when we arrived. There were half the boats out than the week before. We got off to a slow start, too. There were a lot of anglers holding up their hands in frustration as we trolled through the pack. However, Nielson brought some luck along with him. The bite was never fast and furious, but we took a fish here and there throughout the day, and by the time we quit at 2 p.m. there were 11 nice sockeye in the box. It was the best day of sockeye fishing I had ever had!

I returned to the Brewster Pool on Friday, with fishing buddies Rollie Schmitt and Tom Bartlett. The number of boats fishing for sockeye was fewer still. There were fish splashing on the surface near the mouth of the



Okanogan, but there weren't many nets out. We saw a few fish being caught and managed to get one fish in the cooler early in the morning, and had two other hits, but it was slow, slow, slow. We packed it in at about 11 a.m., with just the one fish to take home.

The announcement of the close of the fishing for sockeye came at a good time. Fishing had slowed down significantly in the past week. We're all hoping that the cooler weather allowed the fish to scoot up the Okanogan and on into Canada. We're all hoping that they get enough fish to the new hatchery to get their needed fish for spawning. We're also hoping that the cooler temperatures will urge the sockeye to get up to Lake Wenatchee. When I last checked we were still short of the number needed to have a sockeye fishing season on the lake, but we all have our fingers crossed.

The good news for the salmon season is that the original forecast for 73,000 summer run Chinook expected to enter the Columbia River this year has been raised to 85,000! That is a lot of summer runs. Fishing was excellent during the Wenatchee Salmon Derby in the middle of the month, and the action at the Brewster Salmon Derby coming up this Friday, Saturday and Sunday should be fantastic. I saw a lot of Chinook hooked by anglers fishing for sockeye. I imagine success is going to be very high when anglers start specifically fishing for them. I will be in Brewster to check on the results of the derby to report in the next column. I expect salmon fishing is going to very good for many weeks to come.

While fishing for sockeye one day Captain Chris Anderson, with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement, pulled up near my boat in his patrol craft and asked if I would like to do a "ride along" in their boat on Potholes Reservoir sometime soon. I told him I sure would and we made plans to go last Saturday. Anderson and I met Sergeant Mike Jewell at the launch on Potholes, near the mouth of Lind Coulee and we headed up the coulee to check on anglers. I experienced a wide range of encounters and the efforts of these enforcement officers. We had boaters return to shore to retrieve fishing licenses left behind, a couple of citations written for people who admitted they were fishing without a license, or a two pole endorsement. We probably talked to fifty anglers or more and very few "tickets" were written. Much of the effort was dedicated to checking boats for the necessary safety equipment. Remember, you must have a life jacket for everyone on board. All children age 12 and under must be wearing a life jacket when in a boat. Every boat also needs to have a throwable cushion or life ring on board. You need to have a charged fire extinguisher and a horn or whistle in the boat as well. Most everyone had most of these items, but the officers handed out several whistles as a courtesy. Just about everyone was courteous with the officers, and many people said they were glad to see them. Most sportsmen feel that we could use more enforcement officers in the field. I want to thank Capt. Anderson for inviting me along. I got a glimpse of what they do to help protect our fish, and wildlife.

One thing that I noticed while on Potholes with the enforcement officers was the number of really big walleye that we saw in live wells, coolers and the boats. Anglers that had a clue about walleye fishing were catching some monsters. We saw several fish over 25 inches, and the anglers that were targeting walleye mentioned that they had to throw back big walleye, as only one over 22 inches is allowed per day. Brian Nielson said he is eager to get me down for a day of walleye fishing and I am going to take him up on that right away.

Well, I have to pull the sockeye gear out of my boat and replace it with Chinook gear. I also need to pull out my walleye gear. I want to get after some of those big walleye on Potholes Reservoir!

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