

# Dave Graybill

## The Fishin' Magician

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Although the weather has been chilly to greet the New Year here in Eastern Washington, there is a trend for warmer temperatures and that is good and bad news. It is good news for those who like to get out and fish the various waters available to us here, but bad news for those who enjoy ice fishing on lakes in our region.

I beat the warming trend and spend my first day of the New Year fishing for steelhead below Wells Dam. I was invited to join Kyle Kelly, Todd Dragu and Bill Harris on board Shane Magnuson's boat. It was about 16 degrees with a slight breeze when we launched below the dam on Thursday morning. That was okay, as we were all used to fishing in chilly winter weather and were dressed for it.

We hadn't drifted far down the bar when the outside rod bounced hard with a hit on the shrimp that was being back trolled on a small diver. Dragu grabbed the rod and a good-sized steelhead peeled off a bunch of line, and then spit the hook just as it got to the boat. We stared over and the same rod went off. This time Kyle Kelly grabbed it and got a small hatchery steelhead to the net. We all celebrated and felt that we were going to put several more in the boat here at Wells. Not.

We continued our drift down and around the corner through water that has consistently produced good catches of steelhead in past years without success. We did get one good strike on the outside rod and another soft take. We also found the bait chewed on the inside rod when we checked it. However, we didn't hook up on our long drifts through very good water.



Magnuson decided to head further down the Columbia, so we pulled the boat and drove down to the Chelan Falls area. There is a good stretch of water off the hatchery outflow above the Beebe Bridge. This has been a very good spot in the winter and we were all excited about putting some baits out through here. After the trolling rods were set I jumped up on the bow and started casting a bobber and jig. The trolling rods were quiet but low in the hole my bobber went down. The fish jumped twice behind the boat, and I could tell it was a smaller fish, but what kind I couldn't tell. It turned out to be a rainbow of about 3 pounds, which was released.

Well, we had a fish for Magnuson to put in his new smoker and there was going to be some good football games on that afternoon, so we headed for the launch. It was a great way to spend the first day

of the year. Good company, great stories and I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else. I was very pleased to be asked to go along.

While fishing at Wells Kyle Kelly told me he had been checking the ice at Fish Lake and was eager to try out his new power auger. So first thing last Saturday morning I checked the web cam and saw that people were fishing on the ice up there. Now I never recommend ice fishing unless I have solid information on firm ice, and with Fish Lake I like to investigate myself.

I drove up there and sure enough there was a big crowd of people on the ice. I walked to a group and even getting there made me nervous. They told me that I had crossed some thin ice. Where they were fishing it was just barely three inches thick. That is just too thin for me to suggest anyone go out on it. I could see some very slushy, soft spots at different places. I stopped to visit with a pair of anglers that had a portable depth sounder and they pulled up the water temperature for me. The water was still 34 degrees. The temperature early that morning was single digit, but as the day warmed it was in the high 20s. The ice conditions were getting worse. When I got to the parking area Scott West, of the Cove Resort, had just pulled up to warn people not to go out on the ice. He had just talked to an enforcement officer with the department of Fish and Wildlife and he had stopped to tell West that a pair of anglers had just broken through the ice. Both of them had been able to get back to firm footing, and make it to

safety. We have some warmer weather forecast and I would strongly recommend that anglers try fishing somewhere off the ice. The same would be true for other popular ice fishing spots in the region. Sorry, you will just have to wait a bit longer to try ice fishing.

The Annual Ice Fishing Festival at Molson has been moved up a full month and will take place on Sidley Lake on January 17th this year. I have participated in this event in the past and the local community really turns out to make this winter derby a wonderful experience, whether you catch fish or not. There is a terrific breakfast at the Grange Hall where there is also a Crafts Fair, bingo and lunch provided by Sitzmark Ski Area.

The second annual Pinewood Derby will also take place on Saturday the 17th. There is over \$3,000.00 in prizes to be awarded to anglers that participate in the ice fishing derby. There is also \$200.00 in prize money for the Pinewood Derby. You can learn more about this great community event by calling Robin Stice at 509-485-4002, or logging onto the Oroville Chamber web site at [www.oroillewashington.com](http://www.oroillewashington.com).

I am not sure what I am going to do with the warmer weather coming up. I may try steelhead fishing at Bridgeport or trout fishing at Rufus Woods. Since I will be in the area I may try both the same day. Fly fishing at Rocky Ford Creek sounds good, too. Heck, I just may go do it all!

Reach Dave at:  
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