

REEL LIFE

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Bob Loomis ice fishing in February on
Idaho's Cascade Lake for Jumbo Perch.

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Welcome to 2022! If 2021 was the year of slowly returning to normal, perhaps 2022 will be the year of back to normal? We can only hope. For those of us that do get away and get outdoors, normal means getting away from the crowds and enjoying the solitude that fishing provides us. And January/February mean one thing – it's ice fishing time! Our expanded issue is full of great articles and information on ice fishing. Having grown up in Wisconsin, I'm very familiar with the allure of winter fishing. The crunch of frozen snow as you traverse out on a lake cracking and groaning with bulging ice, coming upon massive walls of ice rising skyward, and searching out likely spots to drill holes in the ice – it's all part of the fun. So find your frozen lake and remember to dress warm!

Mike Carey - mike@northwestfishingreports.com @mikecareynwfr



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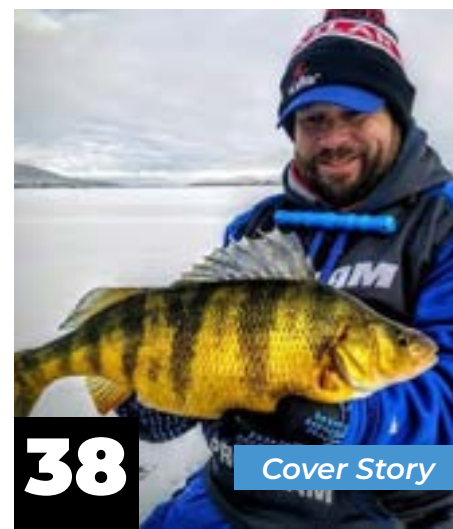
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NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

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HOT REPORTS FROM NORTHWESTFISHINGREPORTS.COM

By: Mike Carey

Welcome to the New Year! As we say goodbye to 2021 it's always fun to check back at the end of the year fishing reports as we wait for the new reports from our readers to start coming in. One New Year's resolution I would encourage is for you to join the Northwest Fishing Reports website and start posting up your own fishing reports. Not only does it help your fellow angler with information, it begins to build your own database of fishing reports that you can use to look back over the years. Here then, are some of the reports that caught our eye...



Scan for Reports



NWFR member "ifightnerdz" has the walleye dialed in!

Spokane River

Ifightnerdz has dialed in the Spokane River for walleye! This detailed report will help you to get on these tasty members of the perch family so you can have your own winter walleye fish and chips meal. The key ifightnerdz reports is a KVD suspending jerkbait in shallow water.



A nice one caught by "Part-Time" on Lake Roosevelt

Lake Roosevelt

NWFR member Part-Time reports having a blast "losing fish", but he also got some dandy rainbow trout, and a couple bonus kokanee! Using a dodger set up with a pink fly and tipped with a maggot for bait was the winning ticket. Winter is an excellent time to hit Lake Roosevelt for trout, just come prepared for snow and ice, and as Part-Time says in his report "Experimenting! That's what I'm all about".



Chum limits made a great day for this reader!

Hood Canal

By the time you see this, the Hood Canal chum fishing will be done. But don't despair, put it on the calendar for next year! This reader and his friends made a great day of it with chum limits that he reports smoked up really well. Green jigs under a float did it...



Lot's of "fire trucks" and then this beautiful coho.

Skookumchuck River

Depression is a serious thing, we all need to find ways to fight it. This reader reports fishing helped him. Lots of "fire trucks" but he ended the day with this beauty. Purple and black jigs (a great color for coho!) scored him his fish.



7.5 pounds of squid goodness!

Area 9

Winter... means squidding season is in full gear. "igotfishon" got lots of squid on at the Edmonds Pier. He reports many squiders got their ten pound limits. Be sure to dress up for those cold night jigging sessions, the end result is worth it. In addition to the report is a video so check it out!



Hot shore action on Fourth of July Lake

Fourth of July Lake

NWFR member "dluders" reports very good winter fishing on Black Friday, catching rainbows up to 16". He says artificial lures out fished bait. "I was using a silver, 1/4-oz. Acme Kastmaster slab-jig lure, and letting it sink about 10 seconds before starting an irregular retrieve."



Alright! Some fun reports and hopefully you'll have new ideas and places to go fishing. See you all on the water!

-Mike Carey
@mikecareynwfr

COLD WEATHER KEEPERS: STURGEON IN THE SLOT



Jake Munden

As fall turns to winter and the water temperatures drop, anglers across the Columbia River region begin to anticipate the sturgeon retention season that traditionally opens January 1st from Bonneville to McNary Dams. Sturgeon fishing in the pools between the middle Columbia River Dams is all catch and release, except for a short window of retention opportunity in the winter. The pools between the dams are

set with a retention quota based on the estimated number of total sturgeon in the pool. Typically, the pool from Bonneville dam to The Dalles Dam has a quota of 500 keepers with a slot range from 38 to 54 inches being a keeper fish. From The Dalles Dam to John Day the quota is between 100-150 fish, varying year to year with a slot of 43-54 inches. Finally, the pool from John Day up to McNary Dam has a quota of 100-110 fish with a slot of 43-54 inches. These quotas change every year;

however, the slot size stays the same. This class of fish is not sexually mature yet allowing a limited number of fish to be taken for consumption. The limit is one keeper per day, with 2 keepers allowed in an annual season. Sturgeon meat makes incredible table fare and is personally one of my favorite white meat fish to consume. Its firm, flaky meat is excellent fried, barbequed, baked, smoked, and canned. Sturgeon is a boneless fish with a cartilage skeleton for its structure. With little



Dirty/Muddy Water Tip from Top Guide



Watch Now!

The author with a perfect sized slot keeper

Jake Munden is the owner of Munden's Rising Son Guide Service, <https://www.facebook.com/risingsonadventures>

waste after processing one of these fish, you can get several pounds of great fillets from one fish.

For most people, the allure of sturgeon fishing comes from the chance to catch a giant dinosaur of a fish that may be up to 12 feet long and pushing 100 years old. However, when targeting these smaller, younger, keeper size fish, there are definitely a few things to consider. The first, is the time of year you are fishing. We must remember that the water is usually cold! I have caught keepers in January when the water is 34-36 degrees. In this situation, it helps to fish deep water and concentrate in holes in the main river channel. Sturgeon are still feeding, so in these deep holes it pays to find a little structure in the hole or a current seam on the surface that indicates a part of the hole that might collect feed for the fish. Sturgeon will position themselves on these seam lines, and while they are not nearly as active in the cold winter months, they will still congregate here, and feed as needed. Another

thing to remember with this cold water is to be patient. While a feeding sturgeon in the summer months will bite relatively quickly, sometimes it takes a bit longer to lure a fish to your offering in the winter. Also, small adjustments in your anchor location may make the difference. I have slid my boat downriver 20-30 yards and started getting bites, or just chalking over a boat width or two if I pick up a mark or two on my finder.

For terminal tackle, you have a few options.

Depending on where I am fishing, I know if I will get into big oversize fish while we are keeper fishing. Honestly, when targeting keepers, I try not to get into the oversize fish. I like to run lighter rods with softer tips when I am keeper fishing. The bite can be incredibly soft and missed if using too heavy of a rod. A good heavy back bounce rod with a 500-size level-wind makes a great keeper set-up. 65 lb. braid is sufficient. I tie all my sturgeon leaders on 100 lb. braid. Keeper hook size is 5/0-7/0. With slower flows this time of year, I can usually run 8-12 oz leads. I like pyramid sinkers to prevent my leads from rolling on the bottom. Be prepared though if we get a rain event or snow melt and have some heavier lead and heavier oversize gear ready.



A day's boat limits!



A happy client.

I have also had to run 32 oz leads and stout oversize rods for keeper fishing in deep water. I like to run all my leads on a slider, with a leader of 2-3 feet. I will use stretchy thread to secure my baits to the hook or half hitches with my leader. If I use the half hitches, I will use a longer leader. I like to have my bait about 1 foot from my lead. Sturgeon like a stationary bait right on the bottom. If the leaders are too long and the current can pick up and move the bait around,

you will get far less bites. As for baits, remember keeper size fish need keeper sized baits. While using a whole shad, or big herring for oversize fish is standard, you won't get many keeper size fish on these big baits. Downsize baits to small orange and red label herring, anchovies, small smelt, squid, and roll mop. Play with scents and don't be afraid to change baits often in the same hole before moving. Sometimes a simple scent change is enough to wake up a

sleeping beast.

Finally, when setting out to keeper fish make sure you pay close attention to the current regulations and any emergency announcements from WDFW or ODFW. The quotas can be met very fast if conditions are favorable. Some years there is very little warning or notice before a pool is closed for retention. Also, measure and check the slot length on all fish. Double check those that are close and error on the side of conservation if the fish is close. You do not want to get checked with a fish that is over or under the slot. There are plenty of fish in the river and with a little patience



Be sure to dress for the weather.

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Winter Perch Fishing Western Washington



Robbie Sy with a nice Lake Washington winter perch

Mike Carey
@mikecareynwfr

For many anglers, winter and perch fishing means sitting next to a 6" hole in the ice, bundled up in seven layers of clothing, periodically clearing away ice from the hole and your rod tip.

That's Washington's eastside version of perch fishing, but on the west side we have an entirely different game. The Cascade mountain range gives westside anglers both a blessing and a curse – four months of steady rain and clouds dampen the spirit of people in the greater Puget Sound region – but we tend to avoid those cold temperatures that turn soft water to hard. While most anglers are off in pursuit of ever dwindling steelhead runs and short blackmouth seasons, there are lesser known fisheries that offer westside winter anglers opportunities to get out and wet a line – and catch a lot of fish in the process. One of those oft over-looked winter fisheries is for the prodigious yellow perch. Most lakes in Washington have populations of perch and usually in big numbers. Danny Garrett of WDFW notes in a recent WDFW perch video, that most lakes have a robust population of perch and are indeed an under-utilized resource. A biological assessment of Lake Washington by WDFW indicated "Yellow Perch *Perca flavescens* was the

most abundant warmwater gamefish species sampled and comprised 19% of the sampled biomass; second to Largescale Suckers (35.3%)". Lake Washington is 22,000 acres in size which means there are a lot of places to search for these perch. Unlike summer perch that hang in the edges of the lakes weedline, in the winter perch tend to migrate to the deeper parts of the lake. Thus, it presents different challenges, and opportunities, from summer perch fishing. When approaching a lake for winter perch fishing, what determines a good place to start? Well, if you have a bathometric map that will give you a good beginning. Look for drop-offs and deep holes. Don't be afraid to prospect deep

waters for perch. On Lake Washington, I've had good success in the channel that runs mid-lake for the Seahawks facility and south of Mercer Island. There's a nice area that drops from 70 feet down to 100 feet. I've found good numbers of 10-11" perch here. Those are the ones you're looking for. But consider a larger lake like Washington is going to have multiple places to find fish so don't get stuck on one particular location just because that's where you see all the reports coming from.

Perch "tend" to group themselves in size classes so if you're catching nothing but 5-6 inch fish it's time to move! When you find the fish you want to keep make note on your GPS. I always drift with my breadcrumbs (trail) on so I can run back to the "top of the drift" and hit the same groups of fish multiple times.

A big part of winter perch fishing is boat control. Because you'll be fishing deeper, windy days can be tough. But so, too, can calm days. Why, you ask? Think of it like this – if the day is calm and your boat is drifting at .1-.2 mph, you are not covering much ground. If you stop over a nice cluster of fish, that's great. But if you stopped over a barren part of the lake you'll end your day wondering why you don't have a picture of a bucket load of fish when others do. It's important, I think, to be on the move. On calm days



Prepare for a filleting session when you get home!

I'll use my electric trolling motor to keep me slowly moving along. I like a speed of .4-.6mph. At this rate you cover enough territory to find fish but aren't moving so fast that you can't keep in contact with the bottom. Now, if by chance you find a large school you may want to anchor up and work the school. If you have an electric trolling motor that has an anchor feature you can hit the anchor button and stay right on the school. In my experience, covering some ground is a better plan of attack. But your results may be different. Find whichever

method you prefer and become an expert at it! As alluded to earlier, keeping contact with the bottom is the single most important factor when it comes to winter perch fishing. These fish are sitting literally on the bottom looking up. They aren't actively schooled in clusters of fish that span 10-20 feet wide. They are sitting in the gravel. So if you're off the bottom you are just not going to have as much luck. You should be constantly making contact with the bottom. Because of this, I prefer a baitcaster reel to a spinning reel. It makes it easier to drop back line as needed when checking in with the bottom. As to how much weight you should be using...enough to stay in contact with the bottom! If we are drifting along at .6 mph I may have a two ounce dropper weight if we're fishing 70-100 feet deep. I'm also using a reel spooled with braid and a fast action rod. This is totally different from summer or fall perch fishing when you're in 10-20 feet of water. In winter you need rod sensitivity to feel the bottom when you're fishing deep.

OK, we've discussed the strategical aspects of winter perch fishing, what about the tactical part? What do you drop down to your targeted adversary? Fortunately, like summer and fall perch, winter perch are not very picky. They



Drop shot rig with two hook set-up.

will eat worms, and chunks of shrimp, plastic scented baits, etc, etc. That said, the number one go to bait for perch is in my opinion – perch! Once you catch that first perch you are literally set for the day as far as bait is concerned. Perch are cannibals. They absolutely will strike a small piece of perch meat on your hook over and over again. What's even better, perch meat, with the skin on, is incredibly durable. You can literally catch one fish after another with the same small chunk of perch meat. If you're using a number 6 hook (you should be because perch have small mouths) a small piece of perch meat with the skin on, say, 3/4" by 1/2" will get you plenty of fish before you need to cut another piece. It's that easy. For rigging, I'll tie up a drop shoot rig with two hooks about 6-8" apart and the weight 6" below the bottom hook. Drag this rig along the bottom. Do NOT make big jigging movements. Make gentle, 4-6 inch drop backs, keeping contact with the bottom. Depending on how aggressive the perch are feeling you may get a solid take or a peck peck. The peck peck days are the most challenging because you'll need to give a little hook set while the fish is pecking at your bait. No need to give a big hook set – a simple quick yank of your rod 6-8 inches will be enough to set the hook. If you miss the fish, just make contact with the bottom. That fish will likely still be there. Once on, keep the pressure on,

reeling constantly and hoist your fish into the boat. Of course, check the regs for the body of water you're fishing as to whether you can use one or two hooks. The hooks can be tiny weighted jigs or bare number 6 hooks. It really doesn't matter much. I've seen plenty of comments when anglers post a picture of a pile of perch about what a pain it must be to filet all those fish. A word of advice that made a big difference for me was to invest in an electric filet knife. The time and ease of filleting with an electric knife verses a single manual blade is like night and day. It's worth every penny and will help you to quickly process all those perch you're going to catch! I would also be remiss if I didn't mention that perch in some lakes can build up toxins and heavy metals. You'll want to pay attention to any special advisories on the lake you're fishing. Lake Washington, for example, has a recommendation of eating one meal of perch per week for adults, and none for pregnant women. That said, perch are a delicious white-fleshed fish that lends itself well to deep or pan frying. You'll enjoy getting on the water to catch them, and eating them when you get home!

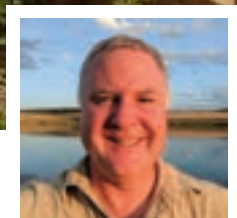
Editor's Note – this article first published in January of 2019



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ADA ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES OUTDOORS

***Ron Zubrick on a Hunting/Viewing Platform
Courtesy Inland Northwest Wildlife Council***



by John Kruse

Until you become physically disabled, the concept of American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility is a little abstract. Sure, you leave those handicap parking spots available and make room on the ADA accessible fishing platforms for those who really need them, but once you need them yourself ADA accessibility becomes a very concrete reality.

It's a reality I discovered right after breaking my leg above the ankle

during a camping trip in August. For the past three months I've really come to appreciate handicap parking stalls, ramps that accommodate scooters, doors that open with a button and the kindness of strangers who will hold a door open for you (because manhandling a heavy door and maneuvering through it on crutches is a not-so-fun adventure).

The biggest thing I've missed though is experiencing time in the outdoors. When you are literally limited to walking

a few yards on crutches or in a walking boot ADA accessibility in the outdoors becomes a really big deal, especially if you are an angler, hunter or person who enjoys watching wildlife.

Fortunately, the Washington Department of Wildlife, Washington State Parks and other government organizations have made great strides to provide ADA accessible opportunities on our public lands. There are dozens of ADA accessible places

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in Central and Eastern Washington providing those with limited mobility access to handicap friendly fishing platforms, hunting/wildlife watching blinds, natural history sites and even a shooting range. Here's a few examples of places you can visit, many of which are found on an interactive map available at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/map>

FISHING

There are numerous publicly ADA accessible fishing piers, platforms or accessible bank access around Central and Eastern Washington. Some of them of interest to our readers include

- South Central Washington – I-82 Pond #6, Clear Lake, Fiorito Ponds.
- Columbia Basin – Moses Lake (North Outlet), Canal Lake, Windmill Lake, Warden Lake, Burke Lake, Banks Lake (Coulee City Marina).
- North Central Washington – Pearrygin Lake, Bonaparte Lake, Roses Lake, Rock Island Ponds, Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery, Beebe Springs (juvenile only).
- Northeast Washington – Badger Lake, West Medical Lake, Liberty Lake, Big Meadow Lake, Lake Ellen, Canyon Creek.

HUNTING/WILDLIFE WATCHING

- The McNary National Wildlife Refuge has three blinds for waterfowl hunting or viewing that can be reserved in advance.
- In Grant County ADA accessible duck hunting blinds are reservable through WDFW at Rocky Ford Creek north of Moses Lake and the Frenchman Regulated Access Area off of Frenchman's Wasteway
- Grant County PUD also has a hunting/wildlife viewing blind available with a dog door at the Buckshot Recreation Area off the Columbia River near Mattawa.
- The Sunnyside Wildlife Area has two new



**Officer Jolynn Beauchene with
a senior citizen is at Liberty
Lake in Spokane County**
Courtesy WDFW

blinds in South Central Washington available on a first-come, first-serve basis with disabled hunters having priority.

- The Oak Creek Wildlife Area has an ADA accessible viewing platform allowing you to see elk up close during the winter.

HISTORY/NATURAL HISTORY

- Columbia Hills State Park has an ADA accessible Native American petroglyph exhibit display at Horsethief Lake.
- Fort Simcoe and Sacajawea State Parks as well as Olmstead Place Historical State Park and the Steptoe Battlefield

State Park Heritage Site all have ADA Accessible trails allowing you to soak in the history of these places.

- Palouse Falls State Park has ADA accessible viewing platforms and paths to take in the views of the waterfall

STATE PARKS

- Just about all of Washington's State Parks with campgrounds have ADA accessible restrooms and many have ADA accessible trails, campsites and picnic areas as well.

SHOOTING RANGE

- The new Sheep Creek Company Road Shooting Range in the Wenas Wildlife Area has ADA facilities.

If you suffer from a permanent disability, you may be eligible for disability status that allows you to purchase a discounted fishing and/or hunting license. You can find out more about this and about the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's work to make the outdoors accessible to all at:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility>

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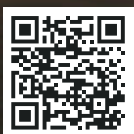



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Cowlitz River B Run Steelhead

COWLITZ RIVER WINTER STEELHEAD

Bruce Warren with a beautiful hatchery steelhead.



by Jason Brooks

Several years ago WDFW decided to stop planting early returning winter steelhead in the Cowlitz River. Most would argue that this was not only a bad decision but one that has led to over pressure and crowded coastal rivers. And now, just a few weeks ago WDFW announced closures on most of those coastal rivers. Just in time is the B run, or late returning winter steelhead heading back to the Cowlitz. It is almost circular in the way of fisheries and once again anglers will flock to the Cowlitz since it is one of the very few rivers left with an abundance of hatchery fish and little worry of incidental mortality of wild fish. This is because dams have virtually removed all wild fish from the Cowlitz River once you get past the confluence of the Toutle River.

Fish will already be in the river by the time this article is published but no worry of missing the run. With a total of 576,263 smolts planted in the river system in 2020 and the first adults expected to return this winter. Blue Creek is famed for bank fishing on the Cowlitz and out of those smolts 238,836 of them were released here,

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The ramp at Blue Creek handles a lot of traffic!

the rest were planted into the main stem of the Cowlitz. This does not mean a half a million steelhead are heading back to the Cowlitz but a serious number will have become adults and return home. It is also more smolt plants in a single river than any of those along the coast. There is a reason why the Cowlitz is known for winter steelhead fishing.

Getting to the river is easy with multiple WDFW access points as well as a few parks and some access lands. With the I-5 launch being the lowest in the system that most steelheader's target, as it is just above where the Toutle dumps in. This means hatchery fish and also big water. Here a jet sled is needed as the water can be fast and the river banks full after a winters rain. Most will motor upriver to where seams, riffles and pools start but others will back troll plugs and bait divers. If the water is high be sure to work the edges of the river where the current will slow and the fish will hold.

Further upstream is Mission Bar, a WDFW access site and boat launch. This is either the take out for those using drift boats or another place to launch a jet sled. Just above Mission Bar is a clay bank that is a popular spot for those that can access the river in a boat. Some bank access allows anglers to fish here but if you are bank bound then head upriver a bit to Blue Creek.

The main hatchery for this river and its steelhead is the Blue Creek hatchery. There is ample parking here and a lot of bank access. Years ago the hatchery would utilize the small creek that kept the eggs cool as a place to put the smolts. Since then they have redirected the outfall of the hatchery to dump into the river just downstream of the boat launch. This is where the fish will also return too so there is a fishing

boundary here. One great thing that WDFW did when revamping the outfall was to put in a wheelchair access and handicap fishing area right at the outfall, and restrict anyone who isn't disabled. This allows those with disabilities a place to catch steelhead.

Just across the river from the boat launch is one of the most popular runs for boondogging and bobberdogging. Both of these techniques are similar in a way that the angler drifts along allowing the bait to naturally roll downriver. Once you get towards the tailout it is time to motor back up to the top across from the boat launch and drift back down again. If you happen to get here on a day that there is little boat traffic then try backtrolling plugs or bait divers right along the rock retaining wall and just past it where large boulders are underwater and steelhead

will be holding in the current breaks.

For bank anglers Blue Creek is one of those places where you need to bring your own rock to stand on. Dozens, if not hundreds of articles have been written about this specific spot and for good reason. A lot of fish are caught here. This is one of those places that anglers can go and catch a steelhead before work and then return after work to catch another. It is also the place where an angler can go and “glow ball”. This means to use a glow in the dark corky or some other bait float and a small gob of cured roe. Use a flashlight or a camera flash to illuminate or “charge” the glowing corky and drift fish it. This is done at night, where some anglers will fish late into the night, catching their daily limit and then when the clock turns to the next day at midnight they catch their daily limit for that day.

Several years ago while fishing with Mike Carey and now retired guide Bruce Warren we motored up past Blue Creek. Remember those 337,877 smolts that were planted in the main stem of the Cowlitz means they can be just about anywhere in the river system. On that day we headed upriver to find some fish that swam past the Blue Creek hatchery intake and will eventually make their way to Barrier Dam where the salmon hatchery is located. Though they won't necessarily head



Bankies and boats sharing the drift just below the hatchery boat launch.

into that hatchery intake they will hold upriver and at the dam itself. We caught some fish upriver that day and it turns out very few anglers made that same decision. The famed Cowlitz had dozens of boats hitting the Blue Creek and Mission Bar drifts but we were nearly alone. Just one other guide boat was upriver with us and that speaks volumes when the only two boats in an area are guides. Don't be afraid to venture to other areas or fish runs and slots that anglers pass over to get to the most popular holes.

The years of the early run are over, and so would the run be if it was still around. Now is the time that the B run steelhead arrive and

the Cowlitz will be one of the few rivers with a healthy return of hatchery fish. You won't be alone but you will be fishing a river with a good return and that is something most coastal rivers haven't had in a long time. This river offers just about everything for the angler. From hike in and bank spots to jet sled and drift boat runs. An early morning bite and another in the middle of the night. It is time to head to the Cowlitz where the winter steelhead will be in the river clear up until the first spring chinook arrives. This river also offers a very rare chance later in winter to double up on steelhead and springers, and is another reason why it is so popular.

PERCH ICE FISHING

The Eyes Have It!



Watch Now!

Watch NWFRTV #41:
Ice Fishing Basics and Olympic Peninsula Steelhead



by Josh Avalos DeBruler

A mosaic of unearthly sounds from the expanding and contracting ice reverberated off a frozen lake Curlew and into my frosty tent. Most reasonable anglers opt for a heated room in the nearby town of Republic when ice fishing at this northeastern fishery, but being frugal and adventurous, and perhaps a little out of my mind, I decided to get a true winter experience by tent camping up on a bluff, perched next to the lakes shore. A decision I would later come to question as 15 degree temperatures and what seemed like the never-ending howls of wolves, kept me awake till the early hours of the morning.

An ice fisherman doesn't have to freeze amongst the wolves to enjoy this fishery. In fact, the nearby town of Republic offers plenty of comfortable lodging with restaurants only walking distances away. Curlew State Park, which is located right next to the lake, is also an option for those who opt to bring along a camper or RV. Regardless of where one chooses to stay, there is plenty of fun and productivity to be had at this bountiful iced over lake. As a bonus, you get a chance to explore some of the Washington's most beautiful country abound with wildlife ranging from moose and elk, to black bears and white tails.

When it comes to ice fishing, anglers don't have to look all the way over to the Dakotas or the Great Lakes. Washington State has several northern and eastern lakes that reach temperatures cold enough to offer a robust wintertime

fishery. Both Okanogan and Grant County contain the bulk of Washington's more than 40 ice fishing lakes. If you're new and wanting to learn the ropes, a thorough look at the WDFW webpage dedicated to the sport, will help you get set up for a safe and fun time out on the ice.

Winter fishing at Curlew Lake provides opportunity for rainbow trout, Tiger Muskie, Northern pike minnow, Largemouth and Smallmouth bass, and a variety of other fish. On my trip, I was targeting yellow perch, a small fish in the same family as walleye that makes for great pan-fair and due to its invasive nature at Curlew Lake, has no size limit and currently provides anglers with the opportunity to retain an unlimited amount of these pan fish. For my first time out to this lake, I brought along a manual ice auger



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(you may need to do some searching around for these ahead of time as they can be a difficult item to find) a lightweight 4 foot fishing rod, and a 5 gallon bucket to collect my catch. Aside from these pieces of gear, I also carried some essential safety items. Draped around my neck I held a set of corded ice picks. These are small hand held picks that can be jammed into the ice and used as an anchor to pull oneself out of the water in case of a fall through. A measuring tape is also necessary to determine the thickness of the ice. Simply drill a hole, measure the thickness, and make sure that it meets the minimum requirement for whatever amount of weight the ice will be supporting. If snowmobiling is the plan, the ice must be a minimum of 5 inches thick. For a car or truck, 12+ inches is sufficient. Since I was on foot that day, the 12 inches I measured far exceeded the 4 inches required to keep me dry and out of the water. There is a plethora of other safety measures to consider, largely dictated by the idiosyncrasies of the particular lake you are on and the time of year that you are on it. Once again, referring to WDFW webpage should inform you on all of your safety concerns.

My first day on the lake was a dud. This was regardless of the several holes that I had drilled across a vast portion of the ice (a practice known



as “prospecting” which should be done with some regularity). It wasn’t until the second day, when I met a friendly local who offered to bring me along to his honey hole that the action heated up in a big way.

The small jigging spoon I had rigged to my 6 pound monofilament was hit within the first few minutes of reaching the bottom column of the lake. To no surprise, out came a plump yellow perch. It’s belly, fat with eggs. I landed a few more over the next 20 minutes or so, but within that same time, my fishing partner had already finished for the day and began packing his things to head home. It turns out, in this short span of time, he had already reached the 30 fish limit in which he had set for himself. The magic was in the bait. To my good fortune, before packing it in, my new fishing buddy let me in on his secret. It was simple and it was increasingly available with each new catch. It was

perch eyeball.

Turns out yellow perch don’t shy away from a bit of cannibalism. In fact, they seem to go wild for the eyeballs of their fellow peers. A knife with a sharp point is all that’s needed for the removal process. Be sure to keep the eyeball whole, as these fish, for one reason or another, tend to reject a sloppy eyeball. Once removed it can be hooked to a 1/8th ounce jig head and dropped down through the ice. After that, the action will commence!

The action was so hot after introducing the coveted perch eye, that bringing these fish in with a traditional rod and reel method actually became a bit repetitious and the unvarying nature of it left me wanting to try something new. So, once a tangle in my line had briefly decommissioned my Okuma Ceymar, I decided to deploy my tackle by using only a jig head, bait, and line. I’m not sure if it

was the primitive feel of hand lining, or the ability to sense each bite with my fingertips, but the absence of a rod and reel added a new layer of satisfaction to the experience. It was a feeling of self-reliance, one that liberated me from the constraints of mechanical devices, and ultimately brought me to my desired limit of yellow perch. 50 total to be exact.

When ice fishing for perch, there's a wide array of different tackle and techniques you can use. In general: spoons, jigs, or jig heads with some form of bait, be it an eyeball, a maggot, or a worm, should all get the job done. When attempting to locate the fish, it's good practice to deploy the jiggging spoon first. The flash of the spoon tends to mimic the look of a bait fish and is often successful in bringing in schools of perch, even if they are not located beneath or immediately near your hole. If the spoon remains productive, stick with what's working, but I've found that once I get into the fish, a jig head with an eyeball or a maggot is effective at enticing a bite.

There are many ways to prepare your yellow perch for consumption. Since I had what felt like a bucket load, I had to look to methods of long term preservation. My plan was to pickle the bulk of my perch, and the ones I kept out of jars, were pan fried whole in sizzling hot oil, picked from the bones, then served over a tostada



with guacamole, lime and salsa. Homage to my late grandma and her excellent authentic Mexican cooking! A more common way to prepare this fish would be the traditional fillet, bread, and deep fry method. If you have the time and perhaps a few extra hands to help with the processing, then this is a good choice for a good old fashioned fish fry.

Ice fishing is a wonderful way to get outside during the winter and enjoy a type of fishery that many in the Pacific Northwest don't typically get to experience. It will allow you to test out your heavy duty winter gear, it will place you in areas that often feel like true "winter wonderlands" and it will likely send you home with a bounty of food for a family fish fry, or for filling up jars with your favorite pickling recipe.



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by Adam Ty Oberlander

Walleye Thai Curry

This spring I befriended some guys from Nepal while fishing for spring Walleye. We shared native dishes on a few evenings. I brought them some of my Collard greens and they brought me their favorite Walleye Thai curry. As Nepalese cooking incorporates many forms, I modified the dish along the way to have that “Thai” feel to it. The main concern with a curry is that the spices you choose are not overpowering the ingredient you want to

champion (Walleye) in the dish. My children are my toughest critics preferring Asian dishes that are both sweet AND savory, which is why I chose a Thai Curry. I rarely use substitutions for my curries as it will cheapen the flavor and you lose that “wow” affect around the table. Cooking the spices into the paste (Step 1), allows the paste to spread the savory flavor to the coconut milk (Step 2). Palm sugar carries a different flavor to sugar and is used to bind the creamy coconut milk with the savory spices.

4 tbsp coconut oil
2 tbsp red curry paste
2 whole star anise
2 tbsp minced garlic
2 tbsp minced galangal
2 tbsp minced lemongrass
1 tsp fresh ground cumin seed
2 tsp fresh ground coriander seed
1/2 tsp cayenne
2 bay leaves
2 large shallots cut round
1 can coconut milk
1 tbsp palm sugar
2 Walleye filets
4 bok choy babies
1 tbsp ginger powder
1 tbsp ginger powder
1/4 cup chopped coriander

1. Heat a pot on medium with the coconut oil. Add red curry paste, star anise, garlic, galangal, lemongrass, cumin, coriander, cayenne, bay leaf, shallots and stir all ingredients. Let the spices sizzle in the curry paste and oil for 3 minutes stirring constantly.
2. Add the coconut milk, palm sugar and turn heat to medium/low. Once the heat has reduced, place the Walleye fillets in the sauce so they are covered. Let the Walleye cook for 4 minutes. In the meantime, toss the the bok choy with the powdered ginger, granulated garlic and salt. Heat 2 tbsp coconut oil in a pan and fry the bok choy on both sides for 2 minutes each side.
3. If you can find them, remove the bay leaves and star anise at this time as you do not want to eat these. Place the walleye in a bowl over rice. Scoop the rest of the sauce and shallots on top of everything. Add a few bok choy to each bowl. Garnish with chopped coriander.

*Winter Kokanee Fishing on
Washington's Lake Merwin*



Watch Now!

Winter Maintenance and Kokanee Fever

The cat and I working on a reel.



by Randy Castello
rseas.adventures@gmail.com

With the typical winter forecast of questionable seas, rainy and icy weekends, someone with kokanee fever may be nervously cussing out the weather man. I know you want to fish but don't waste your energy on the weatherman. Use the time to get ready for next year's kokanee wars. Winterize the boat and spend some time with your gear to assure that your gear is in tip-top condition. Even if you're lucky enough to use your boat during the winter, it should be winterized. Following are some thoughts and ramblings that will help you prepare for warmer times to come.

Boat/Motor

It is time to cover the boat or store it undercover. Snow and freezing temperatures play havoc with any moisture that

may collect in your boat. To that note, pull the plug and or drain anything on your boat that holds water. Make sure that you drain, blow out or add RV antifreeze to any washdown or live well pumps. If you store your boat outside and are a seasonal user you have some work cut out for you. Garage stored or year around boaters are not off the hook and have a task or two to attend to also. Now is the time to get at it.



Adding fuel stabilizer as part of your winter maintenance.

Aside from cleaning the boat the number 1 most important item on your winterization chores list is your fuel system. Check all fuel lines and fuel line fittings. Replace anything that is brittle, cracked or otherwise damaged. Now is also the time to replace or drain as appropriate your fuel/water separator. Water trapped in the canister can freeze and crack the unit. If your boat is not equipped, it is a great time to install one. You should add a fuel stabilizer with each fill up but if you do not, make sure you add it before long term storage. Add the stabilizer and then top off the tank. Check hydraulic fluid levels for any steering

or power tilt/trim units. Use your motor manufactures recommended products and do not top off or mix the various manufactures products.

Often overlooked but your winterization routine should include changing the lower unit oil. There are a number of reasons for doing this before the big freeze sets in. If there is any water in your lower unit it can freeze and damage the lower unit. It also gives you the opportunity to evaluate the condition of the lower unit. If the gear lube is milky a seal has been compromised. The water can freeze and/or corrode the internal components which may result in major

damage. Check the lower plug; it is magnetic and designed to collect metal shavings. A few shavings are OK, but if there is a cityscape of shavings growing on the plug you have some level of gear failure brewing. It will need to be repaired before you put it back in service.

Pull the propeller and check the shaft for fishing line or damage. Remember to lay all the nuts, washers, sleeves or adaptors out in the same order they came off the shaft. This makes reassembly much easier. Take a look at the propeller, if the blade edges are showing an excessive number of nicks/dings, now might be the time to send it in to be rebuilt. Even slightly damaged blades will affect performance and running a boat with severely damaged blades can lead to all kinds of shaft/seal problems down the road. Using waterproof grease, generously grease the shaft before you reinstall the propeller.

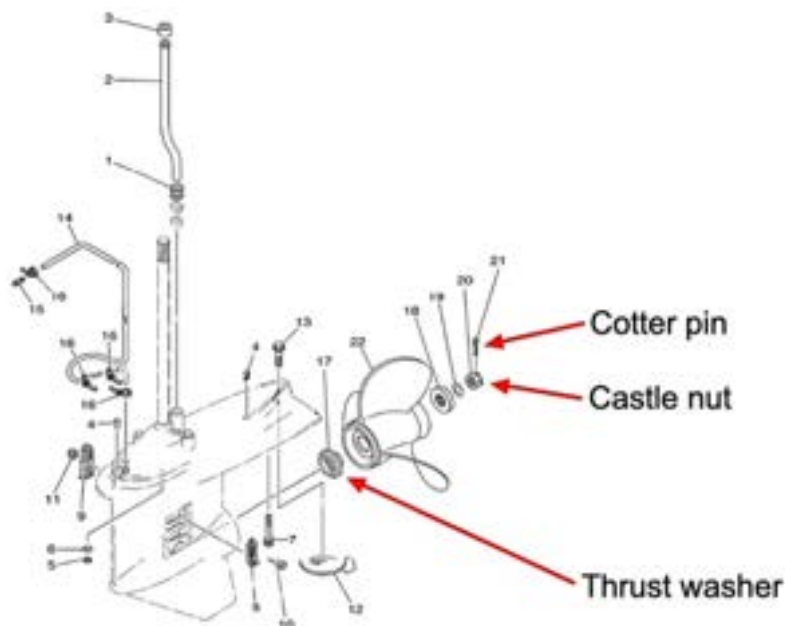
Battery and Various Electrical Connections; especially important during the winter, make sure the battery is topped off with distilled water then bring it up to full charge. A battery at full charge is less likely to freeze; in fact, a fully charged battery can withstand -58 degrees Fahrenheit before freezing. If you find corrosion on the terminals, remove the battery from the boat and clean it off with a mild solution of baking soda and

water. Once everything is clean it is also a good idea to use one of the various corrosion guard offerings after reassembly. As long as you have 12 volt wiring on the brain you should also go through the rest of your electrical installation and look for loose connections and damaged wiring. Check all the switches and breakers to make sure they are working.

Trailer

Give your trailer the once over: Check the trailer lights and trailer brake fluid levels. Also, check the tire pressure on all the tires including the spare. If you can, protect the tires from the sun. Assure that all bunks and or rollers are in good condition. Check your safety chain, winch strap or cable and tie down straps and replace if they are questionable. Check your lights and if they need replacing consider replacing with the waterproof LED lights. Initially they are more costly but with the increased reliability they will pay for themselves in no time. As an added safety benefit the LEDs are much brighter than the standard 12-volt incandescent lights. Now is also a good time to check and repack your trailer bearings, better safe than sorry.

With the boat drained, fuel system in good condition, all your hydraulic systems topped off, gear oil serviced, all things electrical are



Gear case/prop schematic.

functioning as expected and the trailer serviceable there is one last thing to do. Raise the bow so all rain water or snow melt drains out of the boat and then tilt the lower unit down so water will not collect in the lower unit, freeze and damage the motor.

Rods Reels and Gear

I know, all your rods are piled up safe and sound in the corner of the garage and better yet everything worked fine last year so you have nothing to worry about - wrong! Now is the time to assure all your gear is in tip-top condition. Come spring you don't want to lose the fish of a lifetime because your favorite reel has a case of the herkie-jerkies. Although

with most reels it is easy enough to replace the drag washers, sometimes getting the replacement parts can be a challenge. I am a Shimano guy but I have to say they can be very slow in supporting parts orders. There are a number of websites offering online reel parts but sometimes their stock is limited or on backorder.

When you disassemble your reels use Simple Green to thoroughly clean the reel components. Rinse and then dry the parts using the low setting on a blow-drier before reassembly. Once the parts are clean inspect everything, looking for unusual wear and replace anything that is suspect. Use the advanced synthetic lubricants and

reel grease sparingly during the reassembly process. If you are running mono, replace it with new line. Take your reels to a high-volume tackle store like Holiday Sports in Burlington and have them bulk fill your reels. Their line should be fresher and they will recycle your old line.

Also give all your rods the once over. Make a point to verify that each line guide is not cracked or worn. You can use a cotton swab and swirl around in each guide. If the guide catches any cotton fibers the guide needs to be replaced.

Years ago, I was fishing offshore for yellowfin tuna on one of my kayaks. After a 3-hour paddle to the area I wanted to fish I found the temperature break I was looking for and got serious about my fishing. On the way out I had drug a large Rapala type lure and caught a few barracuda but when I got on-site, I opened up the front hatch on the yak and got out a live bait rod and a jig stick. In the chop I had a difficult time getting the jig stick out of the belly of the kayak but at the time didn't think anything of it. My typical drill was to troll live bait in and out of the temperature break and have the jig stick rigged and ready to go if I saw breaking fish or a kelp patty. I had been trolling for about an hour when I saw a huge area of breaking fish.

I paddled like a fiend and



Fuel filter and some cleanup is in order.



A cotton swab can be used to find a cracked line guide.

in about 15 minutes I was sitting in the middle of hundreds of puddling yellowfin tuna. I make the first cast with the jig stick and was instantly into a 30-pound yellowfin. Fish safely tucked into a kill bag I make the next cast, but this time I let the iron sink out before I started winding. Again after a few cranks instant wammo, but this fish had some serious shoulders.

I fought it for an hour or so and suddenly the line snapped at the rod tip and my line went slack. I was exhausted, my back hurt, my heart was pounding and I was in a state of disbelief, thinking what the *#*#? How did that happen? When I examined the rod tip, I saw that the ceramic insert had a hairline crack in it and with the extended fight the guide had sawed through my line. I realized that I must have damaged it when I pulled the rod out of the belly of the kayak. I don't know how big the fish was but I would guess that it was in the 40-50 # range and would have been a true trophy for a shore-based kayak angler.

The now 4-hour paddle back in was productive, having caught a couple yellowtail and another yellowfin on the live bait stick. But the time was still spent second guessing my actions and going through the what ifs... Lesson learned, occasionally check you rod guides or any of your gear for damage, you never know when the once in a lifetime fish is going to come calling and if it does your gear should be in topnotch condition.


Game Plan

Whether or not you fish year-round, winter weather is going to leave you with a few idle days. Don't let them go to waste, now is a great time to develop your upcoming Kokanee game plan. Where the east side winter kokanee fishery tends to hold up the west side kokanee lakes are a different story. A few are year-round lakes and most become a challenge during the winter. East or west my recommendation is that you choose a kokanee lake close to your home, somewhere where you can fish both on the weekend and as your schedule permits during the week. Don't fret about the size of the fish or even the numbers; this will be your learning/confidence building lake. Learn your boat, fish finder, downriggers, trolling speed, lure presentation and generally become the local expert while building confidence in your kokanee angling abilities. The lessons learned at your home lake will help you catch kokanee with confidence in any lake. Whether it is your first time exploring it or a frequently visited lake.

A bit of work but your boat is now winterized. Your gear and equipment is dialed in and you're confident that you can catch kokanee anywhere. Hopefully free from equipment issues, this spring you will keep the kokanee-kooler full. If you can't help yourself and are chasing year-round kokanee there's nothing more rewarding than putting a few winter kokanee in your smoker.



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THE HARDEST THING ABOUT ICE FISHING

Frabill Bro-Hub - Brian Brosdahl with a crappie taken through the ice. Several Central Oregon lakes offer a chance to take crappie.



Photo courtesy Frabill



by Gary Lewis

We fished through the ice yesterday. There was a half-inch skiff of hard water on the pond, but we broke the crust at the edge of the dock and put a single Pro-Cure salmon egg on a hook and pretty quick Little Smokey had a nice rainbow in winter colors flopping on the hardwood. It was the only bite we got in an hour of trying, but we went home with smiles on our faces and a trout to fry.

Every January people ask about ice fishing. Where to go? When? What to use? I like to ask why? Why not wait till the ice melts and then go fishing?

For some of us, like my brother-in-law, if we don't go fishing, and soon, we are not nice people to be around. Fishing is what smoothes out our rough edges. We have to fish for the sake of our sanities and our loved ones. Sometimes that means ice fishing.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife lists most of the local lakes as open year-round, but many of them are not accessible without a snowmobile.

When it freezes hard, Diamond Lake in the central Cascades is a great ice-fishing destination



Brian Brosdahl with a crappie taken through the ice. Ice fishing gear can be task-specific or field expedient. A shorter rod is a definite advantage.

Photo courtesy Frabill

and it should be full of fat holdover rainbows. Keep the rainbows (up to five per angler) and turn back any tiger trout or brown trout.

Another good ice fishing destination is Lake of the Woods (southern Oregon) for rainbows, brown trout and yellow perch. There is no limit on the number of perch an angler can keep and they are the best tasting fish in the lake.

Eastern Oregon's Magone Lake is another destination east of Prairie City. Fishing was very good last summer. Snow can close access to

the lake. Check before you go.

East of Prineville, consider Walton Lake, which was full of fish when the gate closed. Keep in mind, you will have to park a ways out and walk in.

In the years when central Oregon's Haystack Reservoir freezes over, it provides a good drive-to opportunity for rainbows, browns, bass and crappie. A quick look at the recreation report on the ODFW web site will reveal several other good options. Click



Eastern Oregon Skyline

on <https://myodfw.com/recreation-report>

Pay special attention to the stocking reports. If a lake was fishing good in October, it could turn out a bucketful of fish in January.

Now to the important part.

HOW NOT TO DROWN OR PERISH FROM HYPOTHERMIA

The most important thing about ice fishing is the thickness of the ice. If it is two inches or less, stay off

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it. Four inches of clear ice is the standard. Clear ice is the strongest. White ice has about fifty percent of the holding power. And ice can be two feet thick in one spot and an inch thick in another. Check it often.

If the ice is thin, wear a life vest and keep a throw rope close.

ICE FISHING GEAR

There is specialized gear for the ice fisherman. Back in the Midwest, they have heated ice houses, generators and TV sets and

they drive out on the ice and have a good time. And every year someone loses their car.

We don't expect you to be that sophisticated here. Layer up, wear good boots, bring a Camp Chef Dutch oven or a portable stove for hot chocolate, and a hat with the coyote trim (faux fur is acceptable) over the ears. Bring buckets to sit on.

Cut a hole with an auger or an ice chisel. I used a hatchet one time. I don't recommend it. A better



A rainbow trout that was caught below thin ice.

idea is to start the hole with a cordless drill and a five-eighths-inch wood auger bit.

Check the thickness with a tape measure. Widen the hole to a maximum of 12 inches in diameter and use a coffee can or a small bucket to skim the ice.

NOT A WHOLE LOT OF TACKLE IS REQUIRED

Prop up an ultra-light trout or crappie rod or use a specialized ice rod which runs from about 25 inches to 36 inches.

To get started, fish natural baits or plastic, with sharp hooks. For crappie, use a small skirted jig or a grub and tip with a Berkley Crappie Nibble. Some people prefer jigging spoons for trout. I'd go with a scented pink plastic worm or a Gulp Alive Crawler.

Bring some hot soup. Build a fire. Now you're ice fishing.

Did I mention the thickness of the ice is the most important thing? The experts say five inches is the minimum for holding up a snowmobile or an ATV.

They tell me that 8 to 12 inches is the minimum for parking a car or a small truck on hard water. Wait till the ice is 15 inches thick to park your F-150 on it. Me? I'm leaving the truck in the parking lot. I don't care how thick it is. If you do park a car on the ice, make it your brother-in-law's Subaru.



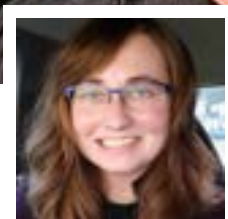
Making hot chocolate with the Stryker stove on a January day.



Watch Now!

**Lake Sammamish
Winter Cuththroat**

**The author with a beautiful
Cranberry Lake winter rainbow.**



Hannah Pennebaker
@HannahNWFR

Winter Trout Opportunities

When most of us think of rainbow trout fishing, we picture tossing out chunks of dough bait while enduring the hot, beating summer sun. Although rainbow trout is a classic summertime fishery, there is much to recommend the wintertime fishery as well. Trout tend to have more voracious appetites and tremendous fighting ability in cold water. They also tend to congregate near the surface, suiting a wide variety of fishing techniques. There is also less pleasure boater traffic this time of year, so this is a fantastic fishery for kayaks and small boats.

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Adding to the fun, just before Black Friday WDFW stocked thousands of rainbows in many lakes across the state of Washington. Check their website to find a recently planted lake near you. This year, WDFW stocked several lakes with jumbo trout. Your chances of getting some fresh rainbow trout for the smoker this winter are great!

So how do we target coldwater trout? One of the keys to success is to use small presentations. These fish are feeding on bugs and other small fish, so a natural presentation

is important. Trolling flies, spoons, small spinners, and stick baits are all great choices. These can all be cast and slowly retrieved, or trolled from a boat. While dodgers can help rainbows locate your offering, in clear cold water lakes they can actually spook the fish. Lake trolls work well in this case because they imitate a school of small fish. Scale down the size of your offering in the winter for better success.

If still fishing is your game, the good news is that dough baits and bobber/worm work well in the winter. Trout tend to scatter in cold water rather than school up, so the action may be more spread out throughout the day. Just keep in mind that the trout, particularly freshly planted ones, will like be near the surface, so make sure to suspend your bait. Try a variety of baits and colors of dough baits to see what the fish are feeding on that day. Luckily for shore fishermen, rainbows tend to hang out in the shallows in cold water. There are also less weeds and algae blooms during this time of year, which opens up more water to fish. If it's a 2 pole endorsement lake, I'll often soak dough bait with one rod and cast out spinners with the other. Remember, small presentations are usually the key in the winter.

For boat fishermen, there are some differences between summer and winter trout fisheries that



A nice stringer of trout is a winter's day payoff.

are good to keep in mind. In cold water, a trout's metabolism slows down. They are less willing to swim great distances to chase down your lure. This is vital to remember when trolling. I'd suggest keeping your speed under 1.5 MPH. On a recent trip to Cranberry Lake (Island County), we caught plenty of jumbo trout on a drift boat at casual rowing speed. This is a kayak and electric trolling motor friendly fishery too! You can use leaded line, or simply crimp a few split shot to get your lure to the desired depth. Downriggers aren't necessary in winter, unlike summer, when the fish lurk in the depths of lakes. Fish finders can still be a great aid in showing you your trolling speed, water temperature, and depth of the lake, however.

Don't put the boat away for the winter quite yet- there are still thousands of rainbow trout out there waiting to hit your dinner table. Not all lakes are open year round, however. Make sure to check your rules and regulations before bundling up and heading out. Whether you choose dough baits or stick baits, the action is hot and the trout are feisty. Beat the cabin fever this year with some winter rainbow trout fishing at your local lake!



Winter trout fishing can mean serenity is easy to find.



ICE PROSPECTING THE NORTHWEST

A beautiful tiger trout.



Eric Magnuson

I've walked and traveled thousands of miles over the highways and ice of the Pacific Northwest for the last 20 plus years. I have fished spots and destinations no one could even imagine there was any Ice Fishing to be had. I searched this tristate triangle looking for any frozen lakes to fish, and the next one I could knock off the list. Those were the days before social media, and you didn't encounter as many anglers on the ice as you might today. They refer to me as the Voice of Ice Fishing in the Pacific Northwest...

Over the years of promoting and pushing this sport, it just exploded in time across the Pacific Northwest. Ice fishing has grown in popularity in Washington, Idaho, and even south down to Oregon. There are a growing number of stores

and resorts in the Pacific Northwest catering to ice anglers as well as more ice fishing gear becoming available to anglers. As ice fishing becomes more popular, so too are certain lakes in this region. Bucket list trips if you may. I'm going to highlight some of these destinations and favorite lakes of mine over the years - my top ice lakes of the Pacific Northwest. We're going to start in my home state, Washington. I start my seasons off in Eastern Washington. After I have hit my small high Mt. Lakes, I'm off to the bigger ones. One of those lakes is Curlew Lake in Ferry County, near the charming gold rush town of Republic. This lake is 921 acres, and seven miles long with plenty of fishing to be had. Expect to find some of the healthiest population of Yellow Perch that are in Washington, great size, and plenty of numbers to keep any angler busy throughout the day. They make an extraordinary table fair, as they fry up real nice. Many anglers fish the vast mudflat in front of the state park for perch. Pounding the bottom with jigs or spoons does well here. Fishing higher in the water column, you'll start getting into some of the most colorful winter Rainbow Trout you'll find. These Trout are plentiful and also make for a fun day chasing a limit, and you could even be lucky enough to land a Tiger Muskie through the ice.

Moving on to my next

YOUR PREMIERE PNW FISHING GUIDE SERVICE



The advertisement features two men, presumably fishing guides, standing on either side of a central graphic. The man on the left is wearing a grey baseball cap, sunglasses, and a dark long-sleeved shirt, holding a large silver fish. The man on the right is wearing a grey hoodie, a grey baseball cap, and orange gloves, holding a large rainbow trout. Between them is a stylized red fish logo with the text "Austin's Northwest Adventures" below it. The background shows a mountain range and a body of water. At the bottom, there is text about booking and a website URL.

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favorite lake, which would be Bead Lake in Pend Oreille County. Bead is a deep, clean lake with very clear water year-round. This lake holds a ton of natural bait for these fish, and these fish can get large! This lake sits eight miles north of Newport and is roughly 718 acres, as well as being home to several species of fish. The most popular fish is the Lake Trout, and there are fish in the double digits swimming in there. If you catch one these lakers on a tiny ice rod, it's a kick in the bibs! The lake draws the attention of many Kokanee purists because of the healthy beautiful Kokanee it has. In addition, many people over the last several years have been focusing on the burbot. They are another fish that's

fun to pull through the ice, and make for a great table fair. Burbot can be quite elusive, however, if you find the right bait and the right place they can be quite rewarding as you'll find burbot growing to over thirty inches.

Speaking of large, let's head Southeast a little to Southern Idaho and a magical place, Lake Cascade. The scenery is breathtaking and the 2 plus pound Perch can stop your heart. When I say 2 pound Perch, I'm talking about a yellow perch pushing 16-17 inches! The record caught and recorded last season was three pounds – that's huge for a perch. With 47 square miles of surface area, it makes this lake the 4th largest reservoir in the state! There are plenty of

areas to fish and get away from crowds as well as having the opportunity to catch many other species such as large and smallmouth Bass, rainbow trout, panfish, kokanee, and land-locked coho. The closest towns are Cascade and Donnelly, and sit nestled in the Mountains of Valley County with plenty of accommodations to keep you comfortable and satisfied! As well there are plenty of places to keep you stocked up on gear and bait. Once you pull a two pound perch out of the ice, you'll be hooked to come back year after year. Bring various baits as the bite can change from time to time. L Minnow style baits worked well on a variety of fish here, but there will be days when they crave that



Ice fishing just may be your next new passion!

micro profile and you may have to downsize a bit. Cascade Lake is a great destination and a fantastic bucket list trip for the whole family!

Staying in Idaho, we'll head to Henrys Lake, where you could practically call those Trout dinosaurs! They are absolute slabs of fish, and some have colors that nearly look like a painting. Henrys is a shallow alpine lake, sitting around 8 square miles in area. Sitting in the Fremont County of Idaho, people flock

here to fish for the cutt-bow, cutthroat, and brook trout. Many consider this lake to be an elite trout fishery! Places like this, ice anglers dream about. I'm talking about fish pushing weight into the teens; this lake is known for larger than average trout. You can expect to see cutthroats averaging 3 to 5 pounds, cutt-bow hybrids pushing twelve pounds, and brook trout range around the three pound mark. As for the lures being used under the ice, well, that just depends on the angler themselves, but most will jig flashy spoons. Many downsize to small tungsten jigs and plastics, or even use droppers with beaded head flies. These fish don't seem too picky on presentation, as long as you are in their zone! If you can make your way down to this lake, I encourage you to do a little homework to plan accordingly.

Now, let's head even further south into Oregon. And yes, you heard me, Oregon. Oregon is not widely known as an ice fishing state due to it's not having long winters. But there are plenty of possibilities to be had, and one favorite opportunity is Diamond Lake. At one point in time, this was one of Oregon's top year round trout lakes, making it a very popular destination for ice anglers. This lake is situated east of Medford on Highway 140, heading to Klamath Falls. The lake is surrounded by mountain peaks, and covering nearly 3,000 acres



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of water. Diamond Lake Resort is on the Northeast shore, where they carry tackle, and share all the latest updates and reports. For the novice angler, or someone traveling light, the resort also rents augers and other gear.

Diamond Lake holds trophy rainbow trout, and these fish can get extremely large feeding on summertime bug hatches. Because of that a small tungsten jig is a go-to lure. Other great lures to fish here are larger spoons, or minnow style baits, jiggling them nonstop. A simpler method is to dead stick a worm with a little smelly jelly. As you target the rainbows in this lake, there are always possibilities to catch a brown trout, or maybe even a tiger trout. These two species have to be released, as ODFW planted these fish to help reduce the Tui Chub population. I've also heard rumors of landing a possible Land Lock Chinook in Diamond so you never know what you'll find! There's a lot of potential ice fishing lakes to explore in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. Get out there and make some unforgettable memories with family and friends. Go on some ice fishing adventures maybe you'll discover something new - possibly a new fishing passion? As always, follow regulations, stay safe, and be a good steward of the ice!

Kokanee Crazy on Lake Roosevelt



Watch Now!



The next record kokanee is out there!

Austin Moser

Austin's Northwest Adventures

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One of the best winter Kokanee and trout fishing lakes in Eastern Washington is hands down Lake Roosevelt in the Grand Coulee area. Lake Roosevelt is such a huge lake with so many opportunities and areas to fish for trophy size Kokanee and large rainbow trout.

The rainbow trout in Lake Roosevelt are triploid rainbow trout and red band rainbows. The red band rainbows are ancestral steelhead that thrived in the river in great numbers before the Grand Coulee dam was built in 1941 which blocked

their return to the ocean. We now have to release those fish to preserve the species. You can tell these fish because they will have their adipose fin intact. The tribal hatchery releases about 750,000 triploid rainbow trout into the Lake per year that have their adipose fin removed. They also release about 30,000 Kokanee per year. This adds an abundance of life in the lake that provides ample opportunity for Anglers to enjoy. The trout fishing is awesome, but there is a huge draw to the lake for the trophy size Kokanee. The Kokanee in Lake Roosevelt are some of the biggest in Washington State with fish averaging, on a good year, 18-24 inches. The Washington state record Kokanee was caught in Lake Roosevelt and weighed in at a whopping 6.25 lbs.

Lake Roosevelt is about 155 miles long. It stretches from Grand Coulee Dam all the way up into the Canadian border. There are great opportunities all over the lake to catch rainbow trout pretty much all year round from one end of the lake to the other.

One of popular techniques on Lake Roosevelt is trolling with streamer flies with a piece of nightcrawler. If you have them, a good technique to start with is side planners. This technique covers a lot of water and gets your gear spread out and away from your boat, which in turn can increase your odds of

success. In winter you'll find most of the fish are feeding on the surface.

A very important part of my fishing arsenal is a good line counter reel such as the Diawa Lexa 300 Line counter. This reel will help you to have consistency in repeating your successes. For instance if you catch a fish 130 feet behind the boat you immediately can let your lures back out to the same distance. This can be especially important when you are plug fishing as the depth your lure is fishing is controlled by the amount of line paid out from the reel. Duplicating what works goes a long ways toward improving your fishing success!

The same technique works well for the Kokanee in the winter months. Typical Kokanee rigs like dodgers with a hoochie skirt are consistent fish catchers. Be sure use two hooks baited with corn and add your favorite scent for better action.

My go to corn for bait is green giant white shoepeg corn dyed pink with Procure Kokanee Korn Magic. I like to add scent to the corn for some added attraction. Kokanee Special scent from Procure is one of my go to scents year in and year out.

There is also a lot of opportunity for bank angling on Lake Roosevelt. The National Park Service has many different parks

all up and down the lake as the entire lake is considered a National Park. Some of the best beaches to fish from are in the nearby parks like Spring Canyon and Keller Ferry.

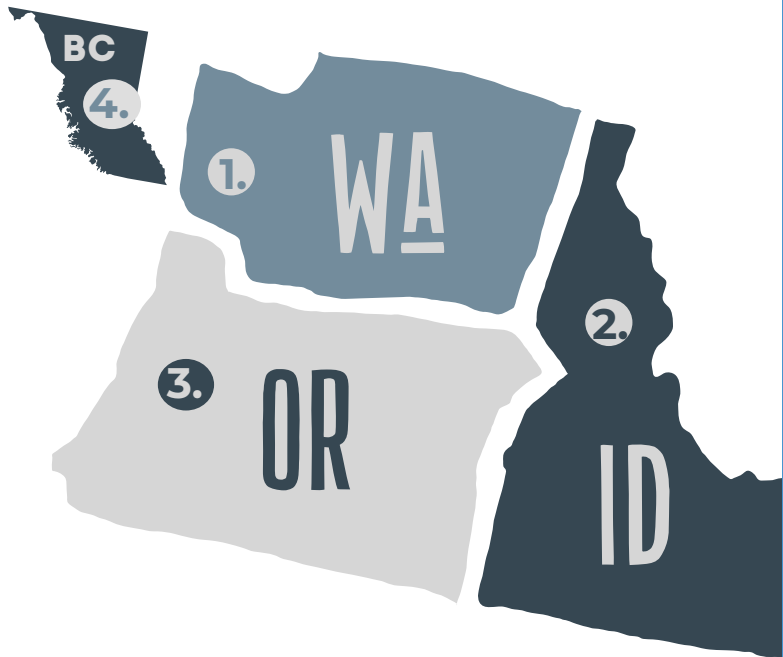
Anglers can plunk bait on the bottom or run bobbers with bait. Casting hardware like Rooster tail spinners can be very effective as well.

It is a fun fishery in the winter time as the water is low and there's lots of beach access for the bank anglers to stretch their legs a bit. It's not uncommon to see families down on the beach with a little fire staying warm as they watch their fishing rods for a bite. Bank anglers have great success catching fish that are cruising the shorelines looking for an easy meal, while taking in all the beautiful scenery Lake Roosevelt National Park has to offer.

The deep cold water with ample food supply makes the Kokanee and rainbows in Lake Roosevelt very exceptional table fair for lucky anglers. The lake provides a wonderful opportunity for people to go out and put food on the table and make incredible memories in one of our national treasures.

Give it a try this winter and you may bring home a Washington trophy!

DIRECTORY



FISH KEY

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-  STURGEON
-  BASS
-  CATFISH
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Life Outdoors

The Weekender Report

Ring in the new year with First Day hikes, waterfowl, and winter wildlife viewing

The start of the new year is a great time to hunt for waterfowl, fish central Puget Sound or winter lakes, and enjoy the annual spectacle of bald eagles, snow geese, elk, and other wintering wildlife.

Be prepared for winter weather this January – it's essential for any outdoor activity. Check the weather conditions, river conditions, and road conditions – and let people know where you're going before heading out.

Razor clams

The razor clam season continues in 2022, with 26 days of digging tentatively scheduled for the Washington coast in January and February; the limit will return to the usual 15 clams beginning Dec. 30.

Winter salmon

Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) reopens on New Year's Day for resident Chinook salmon, also known as blackmouth, with a daily limit of one hatchery Chinook. This popular winter fishery is scheduled to run through March 31 but may close earlier depending on angler success. Make sure to check the emergency rule changes before heading out.

Ice fishing

Many eastside lakes may be on their way to having a solid layer of ice cover, but under the surface there's a flurry of activity, with trout, crappie and perch waiting to be caught by the tenacious angler. Fishing on iced over lakes can be very dangerous, so follow best practices and keep a close eye on ice conditions.

Steelhead

Hatchery winter steelhead are returning to rivers across the Puget Sound region, Olympic Peninsula, and southwest Washington, with fishing opportunities typically peaking in January. The statewide daily retention limit is two hatchery steelhead unless specified otherwise. The Chehalis River and its tributaries as well as the Humptulips, Quinault, and Queets/Clearwater rivers remain closed.

Big Game Reports due Jan. 31

Hunters who bought tags for black bear, deer, elk, or turkey must submit their reports on their hunting activities by Jan. 31, 2022 for each 2021 license, permit, or tag. Hunters who report harvest by Jan. 10 will be entered into a drawing for a special incentive permit. Hunters can file their reports by calling 877-945-3492, or online, starting with "ID and Birthdate" under Log-In.



WDFW Weekender Report

Click through for region specific opportunities



Take a first day hike at the Klickitat Wildlife Area:

With stunning views of the Klickitat River, a diverse array of vegetation, and plenty of animals to see, the Klickitat Wildlife Area is a strong choice for your first day hike. Take a walk along the Klickitat Trail through the Fisher Hill Unit, explore the network of old logging roads on the Simcoe Mountains Unit, or experience the open natural beauty of the Soda Springs Unit. And always remember to recreate responsibly while you're out adventuring!



Wild Washington environmental education:

Wild Washington Live!: A Look into Ocean Bottomfish

Our January Wild Washington Live! takes students below the seas for a look at Puget Sound groundfish. Students will learn about rockfish, cod, sole, and flounder and how scientists study fish who live below the ocean's depths. Check the WDFW calendar for more information.

WATCH NOW



Climate change affects everything in nature: fish, wildlife, habitat, ecosystems, us. As stewards, we must act now to protect the places and activities we love. Check out our video about climate change, its impact on hunters, anglers and recreationalists in Washington, and small ways you can help be part of the solution.



Washington residents on climate change

Important Dates

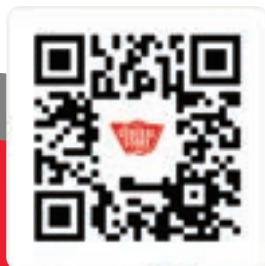
- Jan. 13-15 – Fish and Wildlife Commission webinar
- Jan. 21-23 – Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show (Pasco)
- Feb. 2-6 – Washington Sportsmen's Show (Puyallup)
- Feb. 4-12 – Seattle Boat Show
- Feb. 16-20 – Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show (Portland)
- Feb. 17-19 – Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting (Olympia)
- Feb. 19-20 – The Great Outdoors & Bike Expo (Spokane)
- Feb. 25-17 – Central Washington Sportsmen Show (Yakima)
- Mar. 17-20 – Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show (Spokane)



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