

REEL LIFE

COVER STORY

FIVE TESTED AND TRUE TROUT RIGS

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Looking Past the Ugly:
A dive into Washington Oysters

Photo credit Matthew Carey

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Can you feel it? Can you see it? Spring is coming! The days are longer, the rain is diminishing, and anglers all throughout the Pacific Northwest are pulling out their trout gear and getting ready for spring trout fishing! Our focus this month is on the venerable trout. Many of us have fond memories of catching our first trout – I recall showing off a stringer of trout to drivers passing by my brother and I on a country road – good memories! Memories that I hope you will make with your family. Of course, there's more than trout inside, we also have great articles on lingcod fishing, oyster gathering, and more. So, dust off those fishing poles, buy your license, and go fishing!

Mike Carey - mike@nwfishing.com @mikecareynwfr



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NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

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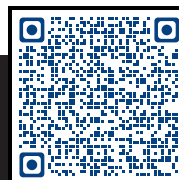
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SCAN ME

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Hillary Holman

THE HOT DOG

Did you know that the hot dog, otherwise known as the daushund, is debatably said to have been created in Frankfurt Germany in 1487? Vienna, Austria also makes a claim on its origination.

Why are hot dogs' red? Hot dogs get their red coloring from sodium nitrate. This is

used to prevent the growth of bacteria, cure the meat and add flavor.

MUSTARD

Did you know that mustard was one of the first crops ever cultivated? Records in China date back 6800 years Did you know mustard was used by the Ancient Greeks to cure anything from snake bites, hysteria to bubonic plague?

Hippocrates praised mustard for its ability to soothe aches and pains In 1904, Brothers George and Francis French debuted their special bright yellow mustard at the worlds fair in St Louis. They used turmeric to get its vibrant yellow color.

KATSUP

Did you know in 1812 Tomatoes were referred to as Love Apples? Katsup was originally spelled with a C. and was not made of tomatoes but was made with pickled fish sauce using grapes, oysters and some unique variable ingredients. Heinz began making Tomato Katsup in 1873.

The myth of the name hot dog and how it got its name, is disputed even until today. From how it got its start, to who developed the bun, controversy still surrounds the hotdogs history. All we really have is stories passed down from one generation to the next.

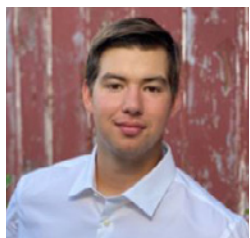
WHO KNEW?

THE HOT DOG,

THE MYTH-THE LEGEND.

5 TESTED AND TRUE TROUT RIGS

– APRIL EDITION



By Paul Lewis

Spring – since we were all kids in this state, April has meant one thing... OPENING DAY OF TROUT FISHING!

As we all know, spring is a time of countless opportunity in the PNW between spring chinook, ocean opportunities, and the state heating up all over, but there is just something magical about opening day. Stocked trout fishing is how many of us got our start, and the 4th Saturday in April

has been our favorite holiday for years. So, with the spirit of a fishing holiday coming shortly, here are 5 tested and true trout rigs to help you slay trout this spring. These tactics work whether you are in a boat or on the shore, but in the spirit of stocked lakes, they are geared towards bank fishing. For boat-specific and trolling tactics, check out the fantastic NWFR articles on trolling for trout.



5. CRANKBAITS/JERK BAIT

Although many of us think of crank and jerk baits as bass lures, smaller 2- and 3-inch crankbaits and jerk baits are trout slayers. Lure fishing is interactive, technical, fast-paced and when it's hot, is a blast. Some

of the best crankbaits for trout include Rapala X-raps, Countdowns, and Ultralight Minnows in various sizes.

Selecting your lure will have to do with conditions, whether you're keying in on a reaction bite or a feed bite, and the hatch in the lake. Each bait is going to have a different action you can relate to it with your retrieval speed, your pauses, and rod jerks. Until you have the fish keying in, change your retrieve every few casts. When they start keying in, you'll get strikes.



4. CASTING SPOONS

Similar to crankbaits, spoons are a very active casting and retrieving way of hooking into trout, and leads to impressive days on the water. Many of us think of spoons as a trolling tactic, but there are some fantastic

options out there for shore anglers who love to fish interactively. The two biggest casting spoon companies for trout are Kastmaster and Thomas Bouyant. Keeping 4 or 5 colors and different weights in the tackle box will cover your bases. The heavier the lure, the easier and further you can cast from the bank, but the faster the sinking action. Letting the lure rest through the retrieval and re-sink, as well as counting down after the cast when the lure first hits the water will set the depth. Starting a cast and sinking 3 seconds, then 4, then 5, etc. will help cover all water depths as best as possible.

Spoons are great for covering water. If fishing a new area and wanting to learn the lake, casting a spoon and walking is a great way to gain knowledge of the lakebed and quickly fish lots of promising areas. After fishing them for a while, you will find what colors work best for certain conditions. The spoon game relies entirely on

sight for trout, so weather and water clarity play huge roles on color selection.

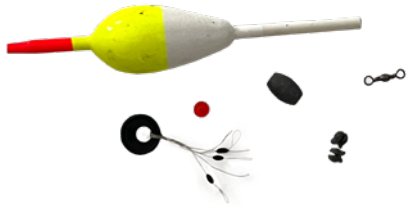


3. MICRO JIG

In the world of finesse fishing, there is nothing more exciting than micro-jigs for trout. Light line, small hooks, subtle movements, and trout that go crazy for small presentations that lead to epic hooksets. Tons of different jigs work on jig heads from 1/32oz to 1/4oz for all different applications. For finicky trout, small jigs down to 3/4 inch work to great, and in frenzied fish, the larger the better sometimes. Micro jigs are a very underutilized tactic on lakes, as plastics hold scent well, and while most stocked fish are seeing a still-fished presentation, you can offer something that seems more alive and enticing, especially to larger fish.

There are many ways to fish a jig, with the most common being a slow

twitching presentation, bouncing bottom and pausing. Jigs also fish well below bobbers or suspended on slow retrieves. They are extremely versatile and when the fish are looking for finesse, will catch you fish!



2. SLIP-FLOATS

Playing off the original bobber setups we all know, slip floats allow for fishing off the surface with varying depths. Slip floats offer control of the whole water column and work great for jigs and bait in all sorts of water conditions. In running water, slip floats allow for change in depths easily to adjust for different water depths, and in slow later, changing depths allow you to find the fish by changing depths every few minutes. The size of slip float needed will change with condition, weight, and a plethora of other things, but the

commonalities are bobber stops, a bead, and a couple feet of leader off the end of the float. One great thing to do when fishing a slip float is to put some small split shot on the leader to help the bait sit directly below the float.

Slip floats are lethal for trout in water from lakes to large rivers. They allow for maximum versatility while fishing all areas. Keep changing depths until the fish are found, then it's all about watching that float go under!



1. CAROLINA RIG- THE STOCKER TROUT SPECIAL

When it comes to stocked trout, the Carolina rig is the go-to time-tested no joke tried and true way of hooking into fish. A Carolina rig consists of a sliding sinker (usually an egg sinker), a bead, a swivel, and your leader line

to a hook. With this method, the sinker holds on the bottom of the lakebed, while your bait floats up off the bottom to your desired depth, set by your leader length. Since our weight sits on bottom, having a floating bait is crucial. In today's market, the most common bait used is Powerbait in all sorts of colors and flavors, but it isn't the only option. Other great baits include flavored marshmallows, or inflated nightcrawlers. As long as the bait floats, you're in business. The Carolina rig is a still fishing setup, so patience is key, but it is by far the most common way to catch stocked trout across the state. Make sure you bring some food and a chair, then get ready to watch your rod tip bend over!

With these 5 tactics, you are sure to slay trout this spring in all different bodies of water. The success with these tactics will depend on the day, and there is no one better than the other, just ones that work in different conditions. In lakes, one great thing to do is fish a couple different ways if you purchase a 2-pole endorsement. Often times, I'll fish a Carolina rig while I'm working a spoon or micro-jig just to cover as many bases as possible. Best of luck to you all this trout season, be sure to check your regulations before hitting the water, and go catch them up!

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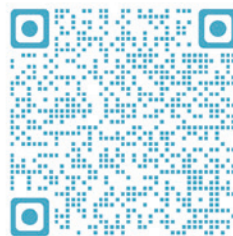
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LINGCOD TIME!



Lingcod fishing is often a repetitive motion of dropping a jig until the telltale thump of hitting rocks with a reactive lift of the rod to keep the hook from getting stuck. Once you find the bottom of the ocean it is a matter of time until you either hang up and lose the jig or you feel the pull of a lingcod trying to take the prize back down into the

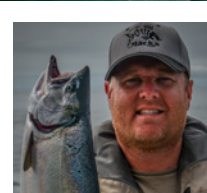
hole where they were hiding. Lingcod fishing is fun and active but can also be frustrating if you lose gear or don't find the fish. There are a few things that can help increase your catch rate as well as save some tackle.

Lingcod are prized by anglers for their tasty flesh but for some reason they are not as sought after as other fish species such as salmon or halibut. This might be because the fishing controlled in Puget Sound by a tight slot limit and in the ocean a depth restriction. Both are put

into place to help keep the population of the fish in a healthy balance. The toothy fish grow slow, and it takes them about two years to reach 18-inches. From there females tend to grow a bit faster than males and will eventually outgrow them altogether. It takes a female three to five years to mature and once they reach that age, they are often too large for the slot limit, and they are often found in deeper waters which is why most of the time you cannot fish very deep in the ocean. There are exceptions to these



By Jason Brooks



regulations so be sure to check the rules before you go.

Early springtime is towards the end of the spawn which starts in December and ends in March. The nests are made in shallower waters and near rocky areas with some eelgrass beds. Lingcod do not migrate far and are known to be in local “colonies” so once you find a good spot be sure to mark it and keep it a secret as the fishing can be good each year. What migration that is done is usually from deep water to shallower water for the spawn. Once the fish start to mature, they head to the deeper rock pinnacles they call home. But this takes a few years, and the younger fish will stay where there is structure and hiding places, such as that eel grass. As the fish reach maturity they tend to stay near rocky areas as they will ambush their prey.

Lingcod are known to tuck into cracks and crevices which is why anglers tend to lose a lot of gear while trying to catch them. One way to keep from donating lures, jigs and weights is to use the tides. Start at a pinnacle and then drift with the tide and away from the bottom structure. Drop the gear down and as you drift the lure will be pulled away from the rocks and pinnacles. If you start

on the wrong side of the structure your lure will be pushed into the rocks and get hung up before a lingcod can find it.

What you offer can also help keep from losing gear. When it comes to jigs the large treble hook will grab the bottom like a grappling hook. Switch it out to a Gamakatsu assist rig, which are two large stainless steel hooks connected together with Dacron. Run the leader through the top eye of the jig so the hooks are on top of it which allows the lead to hit the rocks first and gives you a chance to pull it up before the hooks grab. Lingcod have large, and toothy mouths and will inhale the jig so there is little worry about not

hooking the fish with the hooks on top like this. You can make your own jigs as well. Some anglers use a lead filled piece of copper pipe. The copper has a chemical reaction with the salt water and gives off an electrical impulse that is close to a baitfish swimming by. Another option is to take a banana style mooching weight, wrap it in Hyper-Viz tape or spray paint it with a glow paint. If you want to add some extra enticement connect a duo-loc snap on the bottom, slide a hootchie skirt, also called a squid skirt over it and then connect a small cannonball weight in the head of the skirt. This adds action and is also a scent chamber. Fill the skirt with Pro-Cure





Super Gel, with Flounder Pounder, Squid, Crab and Anchovy being very popular scents. Be sure to attach the assist hooks to the top and then drop it down.

Lingcod are very aggressive and it doesn't take much to get them to bite. If you have extra bait at the end of the day and decide to go for lingcod then a standard mooching set-up works well as long as you use a very stout leader. The teeth are sharp and will cut right through the standard 15 to 20-pound mooching leader. It is a good idea to bump it up to 25 or even 30-pound test. If you are fishing in an area that live bait is allowed then it can be a lot of fun to use fresh greenling, a favorite and common food for lingcod. Stop off at the kelp beds and catch some kelp greenling. Use a mooching rig and hook them so they can still swim and move about. Drop them down to the lingcod rocks and you will know when you are about to get bit as the little greenling will become very active just before the lingcod bites.

The bank bound angler can catch lingcod too. Jettys are the most popular places as well as sea walls. Look towards West Seattle, Edmonds and the many fishing piers of Puget Sound. One of the more popular ocean areas for bank anglers

Lingcod are a Pacific Northwest delicacy

is the jettys of Gray Harbor, especially the north jetty at Ocean Shores. If you decide to venture out on the jetty's then realize that the large rocks can shift and are very slippery. Take a friend and be careful. There are many charter options as well for those without a boat and are reasonably priced. These boats offer a bottom fish trip in the ocean where you will catch "seabass" which are black or blue rockfish and lingcod. For the affordable price you will come home with a lot of great eating fish. When the ocean is open, anglers can also catch copper and canary rockfish but all yelloweye must be released and you must have a descending device on board. Besides lingcod you can catch cabazon which are a large member of the sculpin family. In Puget Sound all rockfish are off-limits.

Lingcod are fun and tasty. Once you find a good spot then be sure to return as the fish do not venture too far but good spots in Puget Sound can be hard to find. There are several local guides that target lingcod in Puget Sound, and it is another great way to learn where, how and when to fish for them. Once you catch one of the great tasting fish, and it is legal to retain, be sure to bleed it right away. The white flesh keeps firm and cuts well if properly bled. From fish fry's to fish tacos and even pan seared, lingcod are one of the best eating fish in the Pacific Northwest.



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RULES FOR TAKING KIDS FISHING



by Mike Carey

Last month I shared information on taking your four-legged friends fishing. It seems fitting with Opening Day trout fishing coming up to share some ideas to make taking kids fishing less stressful, more enjoyable, and most importantly, get them started on a lifetime of fun as anglers. They are, after all, the future of our sport. So let's dive right into the ins and outs of taking kids fishing!

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other, taking a youngest fishing is an excellent way to reconnect with your own youth and relieve found memories, or, create new ones. That said, how you approach taking a kid fishing can make all the

difference in the world between a successful outing that plants that seeds of a future angler, or, a frustrating day not at the office. Lets dive into some of the do's and don'ts of taking a kid fishing. In no particular order are some Rules for Taking a Kid Fishing:

RULE #1 KEEP IT LIGHT


Anglers can get very hardcore in their approach to fishing. Personally, the planning and strategizing are in many ways as satisfying as the actual event. We anglers can get pretty detailed oriented. That's a good thing, but if you are a kid your focus is much more in the here and now. So when you invite your young one to go fishing, expect that they will likely be very excited, but don't

bog them down with a bunch of minutia. They don't need to know details. For them, the anticipation will grow just fine without you not going into great technical details of the coming day's adventure. Answer their questions but avoid going into every little facet of the trip.

RULE #2 PICK A KID FRIENDLY FISHERY

"What the heck is that", you may ask? What it isn't is an eight hour day in a drift boat with the hopes of encountering a fish or two, even if it might be the fish of a lifetime. Kids need action – lots of it. They get easily bored. Pick a fishery that you are reasonably certain will have lots of fishing catching





action in it, like planter trout or perch. Kids generally don't care about size as much as they care about quantity. A day of catching planters is what will give them a positive experience that they will remember years later. More importantly, you being there will be what they really remember.

RULE #3 **DISTRACTIONS ARE OK**

Kids have short attention spans. While you're intently focused on catching the next fish, they are taking in all kinds of stimulation. They will get distracted. And if the action gets slow, they will get bored. Don't be so focused on thinking it's all about catching fish, because it's not. Kids want to be with you. So if the fish aren't cooperating, it's OK to take a break and let them do something else. Pull the boat up on shore and let them wander around. It's amazing how kids can entertain themselves. When my kids were young I allowed them to bring their handheld Nintendo. Sacrilege you say? Maybe, but when a nice fish came along you can bet the Nintendo got set aside so they could catch their fish – and afterward it was back to the Nintendo. The point I'm getting at is let the kid be a kid. Don't force what you think they should be doing with the day, let them have the freedom to have some say in the matter.

RULE #4 **TREATS AND SNACKS**

Kids are snack machines! Be sure to bring foods that they like to snack on. During your pre-trip include them in choices. Make sure they have plenty of munchies along.

RULE #5

Make it an easy fishing technique. The idea here is don't turn your trip into "I'm going to spend the day teaching my kid the details of how to fish". Trust me, over time they will pick these details up. Let it come organically – don't force it. The child will show you how much they want to take in when it comes to techniques. Keep the focus light and on the experience of being outdoors. Use gear the child can handle. You don't need a three hundred dollar rod/reel combo. Something that is easy to use and gets the job done is fine. Remember, kids don't have the dexterity yet to handle fancy gear. A simple push-button reel is plenty good.

RULE #6 **KEEP IT COMFORTABLE**

Make sure your child is properly outfitted for your adventure. Proper clothes, sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, bug spray and extra clothes if they get wet are essential. Being uncomfortable will turn an exciting day into a miserable experience. Don't be afraid to cancel a day if the weather turns marginal. We adults can handle inclement weather much better than kids can.

RULE #7 **KEEP IT SAFE**

Proper flotation on a boat isn't only safe, it's the law. Do them a favor and have proper fitting gear. Not just for safety, but for their comfort. Have a first aid kit for any accidents. Teach them proper handling of a fish to prevent getting poked by a spiny ray. Make sure they are sitting when your boat is under way.

RULE #8 **PATIENCE IS THE KEY**

In all things, keep your child the focus of the day. Let them guide how the day goes. Don't make it so much about catching fish, as having a fun, family experience together. Kids crave your attention and focus. Make it about them and you'll build memories they will remember years later. If you follow the above Rules I won't guarantee your child will grow up to be an angler, but I think it will put the odds in your favor. Remember that this is the kid's day, not yours. The memories the child has from this trip will be etched into their minds for a lifetime. Heavy stuff? Kind of... remember that first Rule – keep it light, keep it fun. Odds are your child will remember that much more than whether they caught a trophy fish or not, and you'll have your own special memories that will last a lifetime.



Destination

MT. HOOD



By Gary Lewis

In high mountain basins, some trout reach full growth at eight inches, brilliant in coloration and voracious, hard fighters on light rods. Where the water is productive, a rainbow might drag the needle to 10 pounds.

Lakes and ponds wink blue like so many sapphires strewn on green velvet, speckled trout sparkle under the wind-riffled surface.

On the shoulders of Mount Hood and in its shadow, are more rivers to walk, more creeks to explore and more miles of lakeshore than one angler could fish in a lifetime. Planning your spring fishing,

here are five lakes where the pursuit is the reward and the payoff is the best trout fishing of the year.

TIMOTHY LAKE

Because it is 1,300 acres at full pool and 80 feet deep, fly anglers sometimes avoid fishing Timothy Lake. But these are the reasons this is such a great fly fishing destination.

Before the Oak Grove Fork of the Clackamas was dammed, the forest was logged, and the stumps are still there, submerged in the shallows. The stumps hold big fish.

This is one place an angler with a fly rod is likely to catch bigger trout than a person prospecting deeper water with trolling

gear. The big fish are in the stumps. Want to catch brook trout? Go early in the year. For the biggest rainbows, fish Timothy into October.

LAKE SIMTUSTUS

On the map, Lake Simtustus is that deep, cold and narrow ribbon of water formed by Pelton Dam, backing up to Round Butte Dam below Lake Billy Chinook on the Deschutes River.

There was a time when the main fishery was for kokanee, but that has changed in favor of rainbow trout, which are stocked in large numbers. Interestingly, kokanee tactics take quick trout limits at Simtustus. Try a Mack's

Lure Double D Dodger and a Wedding Ring SpinDrift Trout, but don't forget to cut down the leader to 16 inches and add a nightcrawler. Another option is the Cha Cha 2-inch Squidder or even a Wally Pop. Corn works too. I like the purple Pro-Cure corn.

Trout are stocked throughout the season and spread throughout the reservoir. The best bet is to troll the edges of the banks on either side, but sometimes rainbows can be teased up in the middle of the channel too.

A tribal permit is required to fish Lake Simtustus. These are reasonably priced and can be purchased at any outlet for fishing licenses in Central Oregon for the day or the entire season. The trout limit is 5 per day, with an 8-inch minimum length, and of these no more than 1 over 20 inches. For more information, visit www.tribalpermit.com or call 541-553-2002.

BADGER LAKE

At full pool, Badger Lake covers 40 acres with a maximum depth of 40 feet. Perhaps you have heard of the rough, dangerous road. It's more than just a rumor. You want to bring your buddy's car, and leave him home. And bring a float tube too, or a small cartop boat.

Best time of the season is as soon as you can drive down the road without encountering a snow bank. I know, I have

been stuck in snow banks on the three routes into Badger Lake.

Some of the prettiest trout on the mountain can be found here - wild redbands, brookies and hatchery rainbows.

The lake when viewed from the dam early in the season looks like a typical steep-sided bowl, but it has good shallow water fishing along the shoreline. Callibaetis mayflies, chironomids and crayfish are major food sources, but the well-stocked fly box should have ants. Lots of ants. Ants made of foam. Ants made of floss, with wings. Big ones. Little ones. You get the idea.

LAURANCE LAKE

A friend of mine called last summer to tell me he had discovered a great new place. Had I ever been there, he asked. Yes. I had to remind him I had told him about Laurance Lake, but evidently the seed of the idea took a lot of time to grow. Like so many anglers, he was planning his next trip back even as he drove home. You are in Bull Trout Country. That's what the sign says, and that's why angling at this 127-acre, very deep lake is restricted to fly- or artificial bait. And that's what keeps



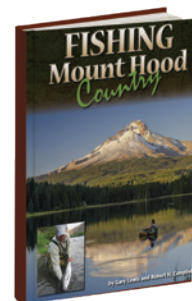
angling pressure down. Laurance is a bull trout sanctuary and it is regularly stocked with rainbow trout.

To find the most fish, pay attention to stream inlets and rocky points adjacent to deeper water.

Employ a clear intermediate sinking line and a fluorocarbon leader. Good patterns for the lake include the Prince, Pheasant Tail, Rubber-leg Hare's Ear, Flying Ant and Woolly Bugger. Go deeper - that's where the bull trout are lying in ambush. Try a C.J. Rufus with a sinking line.

FIND-IT-YOURSELF

Despite the proximity of Mt. Hood to Portland, there are at least 50 lakes that are seldom teased with artificial flies. Sometimes it is the road that keeps people away. Sometimes it is the distance that must be hiked. But any lake deep enough to keep fish alive during a harsh winter, is likely to have brook trout, cutts or rainbows. I have my favorite hike-in spot. Go find your own.



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Gary Lewis is an award-winning author, TV host, speaker and photographer. Recent books include Fishing Central Oregon, 6th Edition, Fishing Mount Hood Country and Bob Nosler Born Ballistic. Gary has hunted and fished in eight countries on three continents and in the islands of the South Pacific. Born and raised in the Northwest, he has been walking forest trails and running rivers for as long as he can remember. Lewis is twice past president of the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and a recipient of NOWA's Enos Bradner Award.

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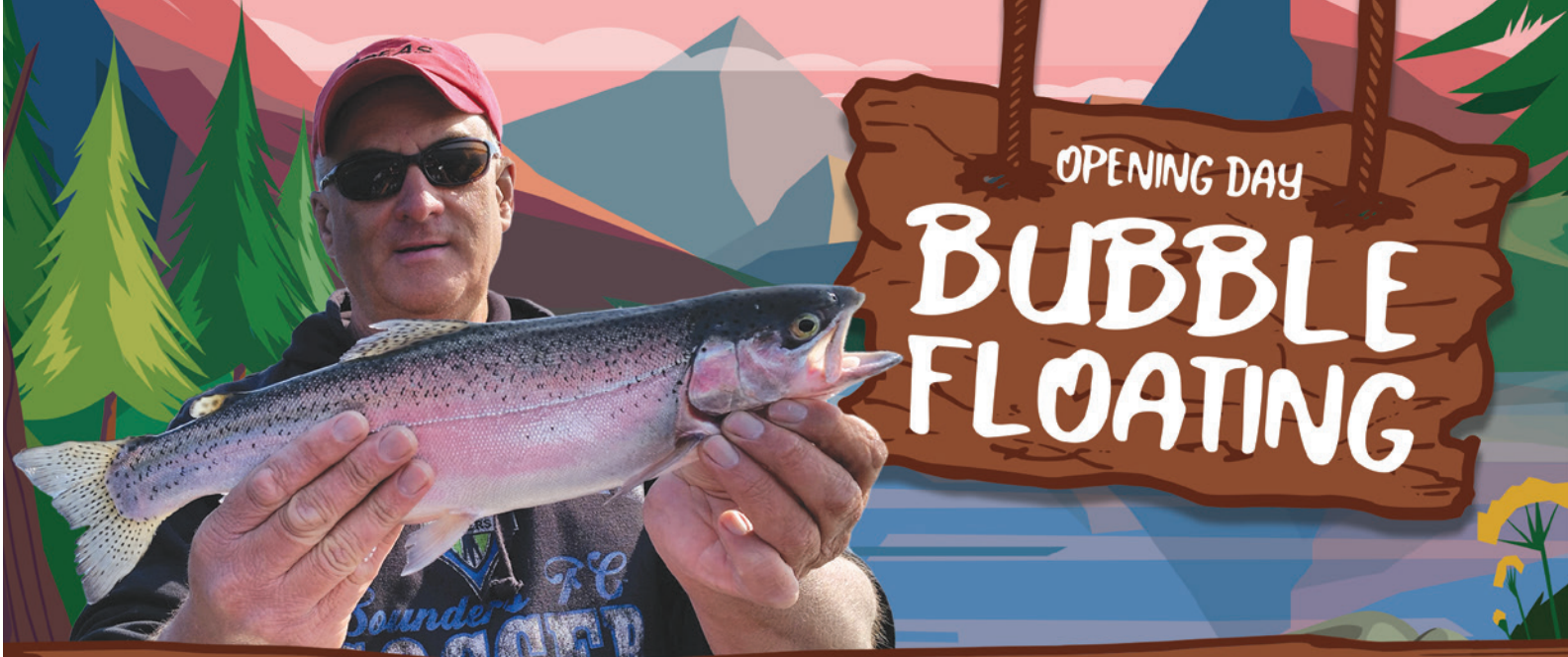


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By Randy Castello

With Western Washingtons opening day right around the corner I figure that I'll give you an old school technique to add to your lowland lake arsenal. With that said, I introduce the float bubble.

You can either rig a dedicated float bubble rod and add it to the usual collection of rods that you haul to the lake. Or make it simple and take just the "bubble rod". Having the bubble rod and a few flies in your vehicle all the time you can make a few casts whenever you feel the need.

As a child; float bubbles and a well-used spinning rod were a key component of my trout gear. Times change and I now have 10 or 12 various weight fly rods, but back then I figured that a float bubble and a fly was fly fishing. Whether it was a fly fishing only lake or I was fishing early season plants that were slurping up some unknown insect on the

surface of the lake, I would just break out the trusty float bubble, tie on a favorite fly and have at it. Now, 50 years later it seems that the WDFW regulations don't allow the use a spinning rod/float bubble combo in waters designated as fly fishing only.

Currently the regs require at least 25 feet of conventional fly line and anglers may not use weights or fixed spool reels or weights. Although the use of a spinning rod and a float bubble isn't allowed on fly fishing only lakes don't fret; opening day and float bubbles go together like, peas and carrots! In fact, catching a planter with a float bubble is a blast and more often than not the fish can be released unharmed. If you are fishing scented dough baits you're 5 fish and out. With a float bubble-n-fly combo, you could fish all morning!

There are a quite a few brands and types of float bubbles. For the purpose of this article were

going to focus on two types. The tapered pin type and the rubber tube system. The tapered pin float bubble is a float with a hollow tapered pin. The design allows you to pull the pin, partially fill the float with water and then reseal the pin to retain the water. This type is free to slide up and down the line so you must use a small bead, snap and a leader. Alternately you can also use a round toothpick to lock the bobber at a given location on your line.

I prefer the rubber tube type of bubble floats. They are also a fillable float but to fill them you stretch the ends apart to add water to the chamber. Most of these will also slide on the line but if you twist the ends a few times it locks the bobber in place. With this set up you can adjust your leader length on the 'fly' and if you are fishing light line, you don't really need any terminal tackle or leader.

Rigging a bubble float for the lowland lake opener is pretty simple. You can set it up either as a sliding rig or rig it so the float is fixed at a given point on the line. The sliding set-up requires a small bead, a small snap or swivel and a 3-6' 1-4# leader. You run the line through the bubble float then through a small bead then finish with a small wire snap or swivel. If you are using the pin type of float you should probably feed the line through the smaller end of the float first. This will assure that the pin doesn't push out while casting. Attach the leader and your fly and you're in business. The other method and the one I usually use is to run your 2-4# main line through a rubber core bubble float and tie your fly directly to the main line. You can then run the float up your line to create a 3-6' leader then twist the center of the float or plug to lock the position.

The purest fly fisherman will just be shaking their heads but bubble float fishing can be just as productive as actual fly-fishing. Your choice of flies can be critical and could be the subject of a whole series of articles but there are a few

major categories you want to focus on. The primary flies are emergers or nymphs, dry flies and streamers. Emergers represent the larval form of an aquatic insect while dry flies mimic the adult version of the critter. Streamers imitate leeches, baitfish, crawfish and an assortment of other larger aquatic critters. If your fly box includes various sizes of these 3 categories your opening day success is all but guaranteed. My very favorite trout rod works great for a bubble float/fly presentation but any light weight trout rod will work.

The rod is a 8' 1-6# class rod. It has just enough backbone to cast the bubble float half way across the lake but a long sensitive upper section to in absorbing shock while fighting your scaly friend. Fishing a bubble float is pretty basic. Whether fishing from a boat or shore, determine your leader length, partially fill the bubble float and cast. If you're using a longer leader your cast should be more of a sweeping cast. Assure that you aren't catching some part of your boat, fishing buddy, your hat or the brush behind you when casting with the longer leaders. After the cast, reel in just enough to straighten out

the leader so the fly is behind the float and then let it sit. After a sip of coffee or whatever may be in your thermos start a very slow halting retrieve. If it takes ten minutes to reel back in you are doing good.

While you reel in watch the surface of the water behind the float for activity. Although the take can be explosive, most of the time it is a very subtle bite. If you see a weird current or ripple behind the bubble float gently lift the rod tip. If it loads up you can set the hook but don't haul back and wail on it. If fishing a longer leader, it is a good idea to have a longer handled net available.

While often overlooked using a bubble float/fly combo can be deadly during the lowland lake opener. It is a technique that once mastered can keep you on the fish through the spring and early summer. With the minimal investment in gear, it is a very cost-effective method to catch trout. The use of a bubble float/fly set-up is also a fantastic way to practice catch and release while assuring minimal impact to your finned playmate.



THE TOP

10

MOST OVERLOOKED

BASS LAKES IN THE NORTH WEST

LAKE WASHINGTON, KING CO

BILLY CLAPP LAKE, GRANT CO

HAUSER LAKE, KOOTENAI CO

SILVER LAKE, COWLITZ CO

LIBERTY LAKE, SPOKANE CO

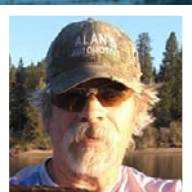
LAKE BOSWORTH, SNOHOMISH CO

ELOIKA LAKE, SPOKANE CO

LAKE BALLINGER, SNOHOMISH CO

LAKE KAPOWSIN, PIERCE CO

BONNIE LAKE, SPOKANE CO



By Rick Lawrence
AKA The Fish-N-Fool

Here are a few lakes that you may have overlooked until now that really should be on your radar to fish this year. These are my top 10.

10. Lake Washington, King Co.

This is a lake I have not fished in many years, but from what I have heard it is just as good today as it was when I last fished it about 30 years ago. Western Washington is seldom considered a bass fishing hot spot by out-of-state anglers, but this lake is the exception. Its close proximity to the populated areas makes it a popular recreational boating destination, but the vast, 21,933 acre lake allows bass anglers to find enough space to chase the trophy largemouth and smallmouth you can still find in the lake. There are a lot of bass in Lake Washington, but they are spread out making it tough to find them for those

new to the lake. Once you learn the structure and key in on productive habitat, largemouth in the 5-7 pound range are available, but you'll certainly need to sort through a number of 1-4 lbs. fish to find them. Smallmouths are also plentiful along some of the rockier shorelines and a few exceed 5 pounds, but most are in the 1-3 pound range. For both largemouth and smallmouth, May and June are the best time to target them, but anglers get a second crack at bass in late fall as well. Boat launches are available around the entire lake but the best launches are Kenmore, Magnuson Park, Gene Coulon Park and Beach Park ramps.

9. Billy Clapp Lake, Grant Co.

Billy Clapp Lake is another one of the East, Wash. lakes that was formed by the prehistoric glacial floods. It located approximately two miles northeast of the Town of Stratford. This 973.60 ac lake which is actually a reservoir that is quite long and narrow. It offers good fishing for a variety of species including Large and Smallmouth Bass, and Walleye, as well as some Panfish, Rainbow Trout, and Kokanee. Species composition in Billy Clapp Lake is influenced heavily by fish migrating down from connected Banks Lake through the canal system. It has miles and miles of rocky shoreline that make it a Smallmouth fisherman's dream, but there are also many shallow coves that hold a good number of Ditch Pickles.

8. Hauser Lake, **Kootenai Co.**

Hauser Lake is 539.2 acres and is one of the best lakes in Idaho. It has some massive Largemouth bass and it is where I caught my P.B. some 25 years ago. It was a monster of a fish topping the scales at just over 9 ¼ pounds and 25 ¾" long. I have caught a lot of bigger fish from this lake since then, but none of them have went over 7 pounds. This lake has a lot of lily pads around most of the lake, but the east side is rocky and drops off quick into deep water. This is where I got my P.B. Fish average 1 to 3 pounds here with me getting at least 1 or 2 fish over 4 on most trips. The only down side to this lake is the number of rude recreational boaters that run the lake. So fishing early or on weekdays is best.

7. Silver Lake, **Cowlitz Co.**

When it comes to monster largemouth bass, look no further than Silver Lake in SW Washington. It has long produced some of the biggest bass found in Western Washington with many reaching 8 pounds and a few that top the 9 pound mark. With over 3,000 acres of grassy shoreline, giant lily pad beds, points, channels and bays create some of the finest bass habitat in the state. Even though Silver Lake has a good bit of

fishing pressure and hosts a numbers tournaments, there is still plenty of solitude to be found and enough big bass to go around. The trophy fishery is made possible by catch-and-release only, so make sure you put the big girls back into the water. The lake has one WDFW boat ramp at the north end.

6. Liberty Lake, **Spokane Co.**

Liberty is one of my favorite bass lakes, but it is plagued with excessive jet skis and water skiers. The other problem is the lack of parking at the boat launch which is located on the north side of the lake. But if you fish this lake on weekdays or super early mornings you can find some real quality fish and not be overrun with all the boat traffic. I have got many a 5+ pound fish out of this lake. The lake has a ton of docks in deeper water that is perfect for skipping soft baits back under them. The other hot spot is the lily pads on the south end of the lake.

5. Lake Bosworth, **Snohomish Co.**

On August 8th, 2016, one of the states smaller lakes at just 102 acres produced a record Largemouth Bass at 12.53 pounds. It was caught by Bill Evans of Bothell and it showed the potential for some really monster bass in western side of the state. Although I have not fished it in many years, I used to

live just a few miles from this lake. I knew back then it held some quality fish, but I never dreamed to would churn out such a monster. Bosworth has some great weed structure on the shallow north end of the lake which is also where the boat launch is located. There is also a lot of lily pads and docks all around the lake so there is nowhere on this lake that doesn't hold fish.

4. Eloika Lake, **Spokane Co.**

This lake is 629 acres and located seven miles north of Chattaroy off Highway US-2, with a year-round open season. Fishing for Largemouth bass in spring and fall are the best bets. This lake has a reputation as an excellent largemouth bass lake with more than a few 4- to 6-pound bass caught each year. The south end of the lake has a large weed bed that produces a lot of good fish as well as the weed mats and coves on the north end are also a good bet. Eloika has a resort with a boat launch and a WDFW boat launch south of Gray's Landing off East Bridges rd.

3. Lake Ballinger, **Snohomish Co.**

This lake is on here for more sentimental reasons, than any resent knowledge of the Bass fishing here. I basically learned how to Bass fish on this lake. From the time I was 8 years old till I was over 13; I spent every day here during the summer fishing,

plus many of weekends the rest of the year. Some days if the weather was nice I would be too sick to go to school, but I was never too sick to fish. I had a small rubber raft that I went all over that lake with. I even camped out overnight on the island a few times. I can remember to this day my first giant bass that hit on the west side of the lake near the boat launch. It was about 6 lbs and hit a purple Cream worm that I had Texas rigged with a pegged weight. I was about 10 years old and the year was 1966 I think. Back then there was also a dock on the south side you could fish off and that is normally where I would launch my boat from. The last time I fished this lake was probably 1970. I must have spent at least 3000 hours fishing this lake back then, man those were some of my best days.

2. Lake Kapowsin, Pierce Co.

Lake Kapowsin is one of the jewels in the lowland Puget Sound area for warmwater fishing. Open year-round, the lake offers good fishing opportunity for largemouth bass, black crappie, yellow perch, and rock bass. Lake Kapowsin is one of the smaller lakes on this list covering only 512 acres. But what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in prime bass habitat. The entire lake is a maze of stumps, floating logs, downed trees and entire shorelines overhung with thick brush. Most of the

lake is less than 20 feet deep so it warms fast and grows big bass. Largemouth bass up to 6 pounds thrill anglers every year with good numbers of 1-3 pound bass to fill the gaps. This is a good lake to practice your favorite angling tactics and refine your skills with your electronics. Soft plastics and bladed jigs dominate the catch, but crankbaits, jerkbaits, and top water baits provide fun action throughout the summer, but be warned this lake is full of hazards so go slow and watch out for stumps.

1. Bonnie Lake, Spokane Co.

This lake is difficult to get to, as the only access is a long drive down a gravel road, launch your small boat over a steep bank into a shallow creek, then follow a narrow weedy channel $\frac{3}{4}$ a mile up to the lake. The good news is, it is all worth the trip. Not only is this lake beautiful, but it is loaded with some giant largemouth as well. This lake was formed by prehistoric glacial floods, so it is long and narrow with many rocky cliffs on both sides. It sits at 1793 ft in elevation and is 327.00 acres. I have not been able to fish this lake very many times as it is quite a trek from where I live, but every time I have gone it has been a blast and caught some amazing fish. This lake is highly productive and is one of the best warm-water fishing lakes in Washington. It has

a long history of producing excellent Largemouth Bass catches as well as Crappie and Perch. It's not only popular with anglers, but it is also popular for kayakers and paddlers. Bonnie Lake is situated in the heart of the channeled scablands making this lake a unique fishery and geological experience.





Fried Oysters Po Boy

If a taste of the bayou is what you're in search of, then fried oysters served on a Po Boy sandwich should serve as formidable dish to satisfy that Louisiana food craving. As with most fried seafood preparations, there is plenty of flexibility with how fried oysters can be prepared and the cook should take whatever liberties they so choose.



by
Josh DeBruler

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE OYSTERS:

- All purpose flour
- Finely ground cornmeal
- Granulated garlic
- Salt
- Pepper
- Dried ground cayenne pepper
- All seasoning
- Egg whites

FOR THE SANDWICH:

- Hoagie or baguette
- Tarter sauce
- Shredded lettuce
- Tomato
- Dill pickle slices
- Red onion
- Capers
- Mustard
- Hot sauce

PREPARATION

For my fried oysters, I start by mixing flour, finely ground cornmeal, granulated garlic, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper in a mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk a couple egg-whites with a whisk or a fork until frothy. Heat up oil in fryer or frying pan to about 370-390 degrees. Make sure oysters are drained and patted dry then sprinkle with whatever type of all-seasoning you like. Once your oil is hot, season oysters with all seasoning, dip into the egg whites, then one-by-one, place oysters into the flour/cornmeal mix and toss. Once coated well, place oysters into the hot oil. Brown on each side and remove with a long pair of tongs. For the sandwich itself, you'll want to use a hoagie or baguette for the bread. On my Po Boy, I like to use tarter sauce, shredded lettuce, tomato, dill pickle slices, red onions, and capers. After adding the fried oysters, I top with a bit of mustard. Try adding hot sauce for a bit of extra kick. Any leftover fried oysters can be served with cocktail or tartar sauce and a lemon wedges.

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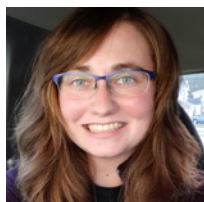


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TROUT FISHING ROD AND REEL SETUPS

by Hannah Pennebaker



Opening day for trout fishing in Washington State is finally here!

After a long and cold winter, there's no better way to start off your fishing season. Every year, WDFW stocks thousands of catchable trout into hundreds of lakes around the state. Get ready to dust off those fishing poles and hit your local lake! But before you fire the boat up, you'll want to make sure to have a reliable rod and reel by your side. There's no doubt that shopping for a new setup can be a frustrating experience. Spinning or casting? Light or heavy? Slow or fast action? Whether

you're looking to get into trout fishing, or just pick up a new rod for your collection, let's go over some great trout fishing rod and reels setups that will get your limit to the net this spring.

ROD AND REEL LINGO

When it comes down to choosing a rod and reel for trout fishing, there are many different factors to consider. We'll divide your choices between trolling and still fishing, to simplify things. But first, let's dig into some of the lingo that we use to talk about rods and reels. To begin with, reels come in size 1000 to 8000. 1000 size reels are ultralight reels used for pan fishing or finesse fishing. 8000 size reels can be used for crab snaring or sturgeon fishing. Spinning reels are a great choice for beginners because they're easy to use and generally cheaper. However, they hold less line, and changing the drag requires you to take your hand off the reel. Baitcasting reels hold much more line and the drag can be easily changed without taking your hand off the reel mid-fight, but must be tuned to the weight you're casting and can backlash, creating a nasty "bird's nest". Try out both to see which one you prefer. For ultralight fishing, small spinning reels are much more common than small baitcasting reels, and you'll usually have an easier time throwing small weights with them.

On the other hand, rods generally are classified by power, action, and material. Power dictates the rods resistance to being flexed. The lighter the weight and smaller the fish you're targeting, the lighter the power you'll want. Action refers to the angle at which rods bend. Slow action is great for downrigger rods, because you want to create a nice bend in the rod for it to "set" when a fish yanks the rod out of the downrigger clip. Fast action means the rod will bend closer to the tip. Pick a fast action rod for bait fishing or casting spinners. Rods are made of either graphite, fiberglass, or composite. This is mostly a personal choice. Fiberglass rods are more durable

than graphite, but graphite is more sensitive. Fiberglass rods work well for trolling since they can withstand the constant bend and flex. Graphite's extra sensitivity lends itself well to picking up subtle trout bites when fishing dough bait or casting spinners. Now that we've clarified some common tackle terms, let's jump into some rod and reel recommendations.

TROLLING SETUPS

If trolling is your favorite way to catch a trout dinner for your family, read on! There are several different options available depending on how you plan to get your gear down to the fish. Especially in the early season, downriggers are not required equipment. Trout have been caught on leaded line for many years, and will

continue to be for years to come. For leaded line, you'll want a heavier rod and reel to accommodate the thicker line. Leaded line is divided into 10 colors; for every color you let out, your presentation sinks 5 feet down. You'll want to remember to back your leaded line with about 50 feet of monofilament, to make sure the line doesn't slip off the reel. I'd suggest the Daiwa Magda and Shimano Curado for your reel. You'll want a reel with extra line capacity since leadcore line is thicker than monofilament and braid. For your rod, Eagle Claw makes a good line of medium power, moderate action rods that work well for leadcore trolling.

Dropper weights are a fantastic way alternative to leaded line for boaters without downriggers. Simply

thread on a bullet weight, tie to a swivel, and tie your leader to the other end of the swivel. It's a good idea to bring a variety of different bullet weights to get to different depths. There are calculators online that you can use to gauge how deep you're actually fishing, depending on weight and length of line let out. For this type of trout fishing, you'll want a medium action rod and a size 2500 to 3000 reel. The Ugly Stik rod has plenty of backbone to accommodate dropper weights.

Although downriggers are not necessary to catch trout, they can certainly help take the guesswork out of locating what depth the trout are schooling at on that particular day. Another advantage downriggers offer is that you can run lighter



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gear, because your poles won't have to support leaded line or dropper weights. You'll still want a pole with some backbone though, as they will have to stand up to being almost spring loaded to the downrigger ball. Most kokanee rods and reels can also be used for trout downrigger setups. For example, the Okuma Kokanee Black pole offers great durability and sensitivity for the price. I'd recommend selecting a light to medium power rod, about 8 to 9 feet long. The Lamiglas Tournament Kokanee rod is another good choice. As for reels, you can't go wrong with the Daiwa Lexa or

Okuma Coldwater. I like line counters on my reels so that I know exactly how far my setback is. Still Fishing Setups Although trolling can certainly be a productive way to catch your limit, few trout can resist a tasty worm or chunk of dough bait. I generally recommend ultralight or light spinning tackle, to maximize the fight from these fish. The Okuma Celilo is a great budget rod which pairs well with the Okuma Ceymar. 1000 to 2500 size reels work best. Fenwick Eagle rods as well as the St. Croix Trout Series



Your gear should be able to handle lunkers!

are reliable and extremely sensitive. Pflueger President and Daiwa Fuego reels are incredibly light and work well for this finesse application. Having multiple setups can be a good idea, particularly on two pole endorsement lakes. Often, I'll anchor my boat in a fishy looking area such as the mouth of a creek or a cove, and toss spinners with one rod while my other one soaks dough bait. This strategy also helps when fishing off a dock or a bank since it allows you to fish near the surface and close to the bottom.

Now that you know the ins and outs of how to choose a rod and reel for trout fishing, it's time to hit the water! Remember to pick a light or ultralight action rod and size 1000 to 2500 size for still fishing, a light to medium fiberglass rod with a small linecounter reel for trolling, or a medium power fiberglass rod with a larger trolling reel for leadcore fishing. Trout fishing is a great way to take the kids out for some fresh air, or introduce someone new to fishing. Having a reliable setup by your side is crucial to your success. Whether you choose to troll or toss dough bait, have fun and stay safe!

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LOOKING PAST THE UGLY:

A DIVE INTO WASHINGTON OYSTERS



by
Josh DeBruler



Nestled on a pebbly Puget Sound beach, where the madrone trees get lost within the backdrop of thick Washington conifer forest, is a food that inspires a variety of passions amongst all who endeavor to try them. They're known as a delicacy to many, an aphrodisiac to some, and are despised by more than just a few. This little creature I speak of is the famed oyster. Though their appearance is often perceived as revolting, there seems to be a consistent pattern amongst those who

muster up the courage to take a first crack at this peculiar saltwater-oddity. It goes as follows: A feeling of disgust and apprehension, followed by a slight curiosity, and as the oyster is liberated from the shell and heads down the hatch, the experience culminates in a sense of gustatory delight that lays to rest all of the preconceived misgivings the first-timer has had about this simple, yet sophisticated culinary wonder.

In general, the shores of the Salish Sea are teaming with oysters. The indigenous tribes who

have inhabited these shores for thousands of years have historically consumed oysters as a traditional food, often drying, smoking, steaming or cooking their harvest over a fire. After years of industrialization and over-harvesting around the Puget Sound, some beaches once rich with this commodity (namely, the native Olympia oyster) have seen sharp declines. Today, restoration projects have worked to restore native oyster populations, and the oyster enjoys a status as one of the most abundant shellfish resources along the shores, from Olympia to

Vancouver Island.

Due to their abundance, it might be assumed that one can simply walk or boat up to any public beach, load up on their share of oysters, and get to schuckin'. It's important to understand that you should never do this. Oysters, as with all other shellfish found around the Salish Sea, are subjected to commonly occurring biotoxins which are accumulated through exposure to a specific type of phytoplankton present in the waters. Eating oysters high in these biotoxins, in some of the direst of cases, can lead to diarrhetic shellfish poisoning, or paralytic shellfish poisoning. Cases like these are rare and typical exposures, when they do occur, are usually in small amounts, generating only mild symptoms. Luckily, avoiding serious gastrointestinal discomfort from this delicacy isn't just a guessing game. Simply make a visit to the Washington State Department of Health website to check the listed shellfish safety map. There you can find an interactive map that allows you to

view which beaches are safe and open for shellfish harvesting based off the current biotoxin levels. Most closures occur during the hottest parts of the year when algae blooms are frequent and toxin levels are generally high. If I haven't sold you on the paralysis via oyster part, well unfortunately I have another piece of information that might only serve to push non-believers even further away. Due to conservation efforts, oysters in Washington State must be shucked on the beach. This means that no, you cannot take oysters in their shell back home or to camp for a barbecue. The reasoning behind this is in the shell itself. Before an oyster becomes what we recognize as an oyster, it exists as tiny larvae in search of adequate substrate to colonize on. It turns out, that the perfect substrate is in fact, other oyster shells. As this process repeats, the oysters eventually form what are known as oyster reefs. These reefs must be maintained in order for populations to thrive. Now, if you do desire to grill your

oysters on the barbecue, and I know many do, don't fret, there are plenty of places to purchase oysters in-the-shell along the Puget Sound and Hood Canal.

The popular Pacific Northwest adage goes "when the tide is out, the table is set". This is very much true for oyster harvesting. Finding them is not a complicated endeavor by any means, and there's no need for shovels, clam guns, or garden trowels. Provided that you are on a public beach (or private beach with permission) and you have done your due diligence on discerning whether or not oysters are safe to consume at the time, then all you need is a cooler with ice, a shucking knife, and a pair of cut-proof gloves. Potlatch State Park, Seal Rock Beach, Dosewallip State Park, and beaches North of Hama Hama, all provide ample opportunity for legal harvesting on the Hood Canal. Other popular beaches can be found on Harstine Island, Oakland Bay, and Case Inlet. I have seen some

exceptionally gruesome hand wounds over the years from folks improperly opening oysters. From small nicks on the thumb, to knife holes completely through the webbing of a guy's hand. The gore has rivaled even the worst of fish filleting accidents I've witnessed. It's for reasons like these, that it's extremely important to practice proper oyster shucking technique while on the beach or in the kitchen. Safety starts with a few essential items and a bit of know-how. If you are shucking your oysters on the beach, you likely won't have a table surface to work on. In this case, you can either shuck on your hand or on top of a five gallon bucket. For in-hand shucking, be sure to wear a pair of cut resistant gloves that also allow for some dexterity. Rest the oyster on top of your palm with the cup-side down (this is the deeper portion of the oyster shell that is shaped similar to a bowl) and the backside facing towards your body. Grip the oyster firmly and apply a dull-bladed shucking knife to the very back portion of the oyster where the two

shells meet. This area is known as the hinge. Tilt the handle of the knife upward at about a 45 degree angle and apply a small amount of pressure to ensure the knife is at least partially lodged into the hinge. Once you're confident that the knife is in the hinge, give the knife a twist while applying a bit of pressure. The oyster should open up, but not entirely. Once open, slide the shucking knife through the oyster while keeping the knife upwards towards the top of the shell. This will sever the abductor muscle and allow the oyster to open completely. Now that you have collected your limit of oysters, it's time to eat! Many of the fine recipes for cooking and serving oysters involve using the shell. As mentioned above keeping shells is not always an option. This poses an issue when the cook desires that classic oyster on a half shell presentation, or when the recipe calls for the oyster to be baked or broiled on a half shell. If you're dinner aspirations fall into either of those two categories, you can simply recycle the shells from oysters purchased at a market and use those to

serve your harvest. Be sure to boil the shells before each use. There are many ways to prepare oysters. Many purists will enjoy their oysters raw, right out of the shell, and though I have partaken in this practice many of times, I will add that the Food and Drug Administration suggests against eating any shellfish in raw form. A safer bet is to either steam, grill, or bake oysters until the shell opens. If the shell does not open, you'll want to discard the oyster as this could be indicative of a dead oyster. Broiling oysters in a half shell with a bit of garlic infused butter is one of my personal favorites. Perhaps you shucked your oysters on the beach? If this is the case, then you can bread and fry them for a Louisiana- style Po Boy sandwich or to be served with lemon and cocktail sauce. So get out there, be safe, and take part in a local tradition that has been around for as long as folks have been walking these rocky shores.

THE WASHINGTON OUTDOORS REPORT

MORE SALMON FORECASTS:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has come out with their second round of salmon forecasts and things are looking up for most runs compared to last year. Starting with the Columbia River, some 230,400 “upriver bright” fall Chinook are expected to return above Bonneville Dam, 9500 less than the 2021 return and well below the 10-year average. As for the lower Columbia “tule” Chinook, that return should be similar to last year with 73,000 salmon forecast to return.

The coho run was very good last year with 829,000 salmon and this year is shaping up to be even better with just under one million salmon coming back. If this is true it will mark the best return of coho we’ve seen in the Columbia since 2014.

As for the sockeye run, that is forecast to improve with 200,000 fish expected. This compares to last year’s return of 152,309 salmon. Unfortunately, the endangered Snake River sockeye run continues to struggle and only 200 fish forecast to come back to Idaho. The projection for the Lake Wenatchee sockeye run is to be below the escapement goal of 23,000 salmon. However, it is worth noting that in recent years, WDFW has routinely under forecast the sockeye run for the Upper Columbia River and Lake Wenatchee so don’t count this fishery out yet.

Heading to the coast, coho salmon returns are expected to be much better than last year’s forecast of 241,800 fish. This year, biologists expect 454,693 coho. Many will be heading to Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay but several other coastal rivers will see improvements as well.

In Puget Sound coho returns to the Sound and surrounding rivers

should be up around eight percent over last year with 666,648 wild and hatchery coho forecast to return. The North Sound stocks are expected to see the bulk of this increase with more coho coming back to the Skagit and Nooksack Rivers. Other areas will likely remain down to include Hood Canal, the Strait of Juan De Fuca and the Snohomish River system.

Finally, the Chinook numbers in Puget Sound are expected to be up by about 19,000 this year, with 250,4440 salmon expected back. This reverses a multi-year downward trend but low returns to some rivers like the Stillaguamish will likely constrain fisheries.

THE COLD-WATER WALLEYE BITE IS HOT:

The Columbia River Walleye Anglers Association had their first tournament of the year March 5th and 6th in the Tri-Cities. Fifty-one anglers fished the Columbia and Snake River looking to bag a limit of six walleye each day. This being the pre-spawn, there were some real Hawgs caught. The biggest walleye brought to the scales was a monster 13.5-pound fish and a total of 11 walleye were weighed in that hovered near the ten-pound mark or better.

As for who won this tournament? That would be the dynamic duo of Matt Brown and Jordan Binstock. They weighed in 12 walleye over two days weighing a total of 67.35 pounds. In addition to bragging rights, Brown and Binstock also get to split a \$3,120 first place check.

The walleye fishing is also hot further downstream. During the first week of March WDFW creel

checkers contacted 47 anglers who caught 54 walleye in The Dalles Pool and 79 anglers who caught 81 walleye in the John Day Pool.

The fishing is also very good right now at Lake Roosevelt. Launching near Kettle Falls, Steven Morris, the owner of SJM Guide Service, took three clients out on March 7th for a day of fishing and came back with 29 fish. The majority of them were eater-size walleye but there were also some nice burbot caught as well, a fish also known as the “poor man’s lobster”.

STATE PARK STAYCATION

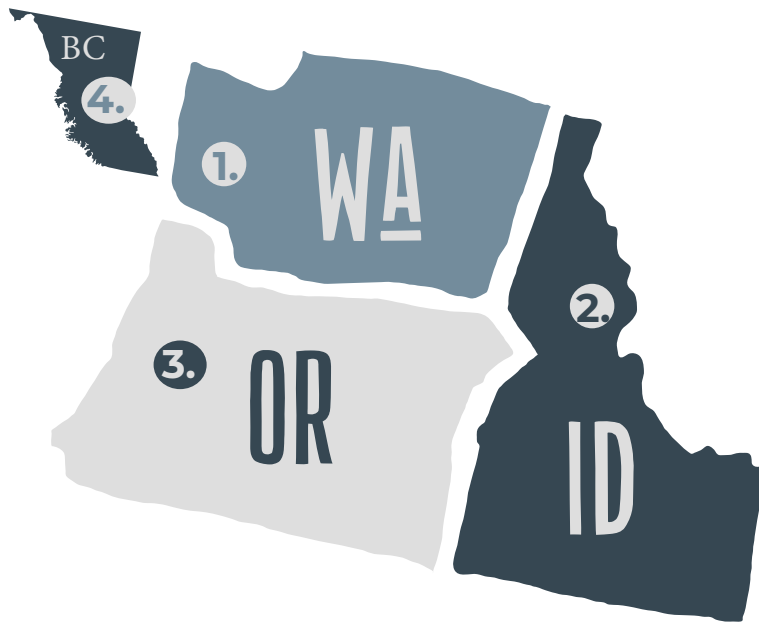
With gas prices at an all time high a staycation at a Washington State Park over the spring break could be a good bet. Sure, it can be chilly at night but if you have an RV or camper you’ll be just fine and if you don’t, consider a rustic cabin stay. An Eastern Washington expedition in particular can be appealing since the day time temperatures are usually mild in late March and early April and you’ve got a good chance to enjoy sunny skies. As of March 10th, there were openings the last weekend of March and the first weekend of April in several state parks east of the Cascades.

Go to
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Life Outdoors

The Weekender Report

From fishing options to gathering shellfish to turkey hunting – spring is here!

Spring has sprung bringing with it brighter, sunny days and warmer weather along with a growing list of fishing activities for trout, salmon, lingcod, halibut, shellfish and the possibility of more coastal razor clam digs.

Statewide opening day for trout in lowland lakes:

The highly anticipated opener is April 23-24 when millions of trout are stocked into hundreds of lakes to boost fishing prospects. Spring is usually the best time of year when the water is cooler, and fish tend to be more active. Click on the WDFW webpage for the statewide trout stocking plan.

Statewide Trout Derby 2022

The WDFW Trout Derby is April 23-Oct. 31. Look for thousands of tagged trout placed into selected lakes to win donated prizes. The average number of tags turned in was 55 percent in 2021. Anglers can find out how many tagged trout are planted in each lake. Click on the WDFW Trout Derby webpage for details.

Puget Sound/Hood Canal shellfish gathering

Spring is an excellent time for gathering clams and oysters on open beaches as low tides switch to daylight hours. Visit the Washington shellfish safety map for an easy to navigate search tool to locate the precise beach you want to view. To find optimal low tides, go to the tide chart. You can also find shellfish harvesting information on the Washington Department of Health webpage.

Coastal razor clam digging

More tentative digs are planned April 1-6 at selected coastal beaches. Additional tentative dates through April 30 can be found by visiting the WDFW coastal razor clam webpage. Shellfish and seafood enthusiasts can make plans to attend the Long Beach Razor Clam Festival on April 16-17.

Winter salmon

Sekiu/Pillar Point (Marine Area 5) in Strait of Juan de Fuca is open daily through April 30 for hatchery winter Chinook. Action is fair to good off the Caves, Pillar Point, Mussolini Rock, Slide area, and Cod Fish Bay. Southern Puget Sound (Marine Area 13) is open year-round, and fair for winter Chinook around the Tacoma Narrows and Fox Island areas. Try for resident coho in Area 13 casting a fly or spinner. For details, go to WDFW salmon fishing page.

Columbia River spring Chinook salmon

Spring Chinook catches along the Lower Columbia mainstem ramped up and fishing is open daily through April 6 below Bonneville Dam. Areas from Tower Island power lines to the Oregon/Washington border are open April 1 through May 5. The forecast of 197,000 adult fish in 2022 up from an actual return of 152,675 in 2021. For Columbia tributary seasons and other details, go to the WDFW website.

**Click for
more**

WDFW Weekender Report

Click through for region specific opportunities



Join the WDFW team:

If you'd enjoy preserving, protecting, and perpetuating the state's fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities, then check out current job openings or sign up for job alerts. From budget manager to community outreach and education specialist, environmental planners to electricians, fiscal technicians to wildlife biologists, a career with WDFW makes a difference.

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WATCH NOW



Farmers and landowners play an important stewardship role in the Chehalis River Basin. Their leadership is urgently needed to support healthy fish populations and the long-term prosperity of working lands. The Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) provides opportunities for willing property owners and communities to engage in restoring and protecting the lands that power our economy.



Protecting Chehalis Basin habitats through collaboration

APRIL NOTICES

A new season of outdoor adventures is underway, and Washingtonians should purchase a 2022-2023 recreational hunting and fishing licenses. The 2021-2022 licenses expired on March 31.

As freshwater and marine fishing opens in spring and summer, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission Boating Program reminds you to take a boater safety education course, if you haven't already, to be prepared for the season.

Wild Washington environmental education: Wild Washington Live! At Hoodsport Hatchery

Join the Hoodsport Hatchery Team on Tuesday, April 26 from 10-11 a.m. We'll take a tour of the hatchery, learn about hatchery operations and how the team mass marks fish. Great for students and families interested in learning more about salmon hatcheries. Appropriate for all ages. For more information, please see the link on our website calendar.

Important Dates

- April 1-7 – Statewide youth-only turkey hunting season
- April 6-13 – Pacific Fishery Management Council salmon fishing season meetings
- April 7 – Puget Sound/eastern Strait (MA 6 to 10) halibut fishing opener
- April 7-9 – Fish and Wildlife Commission
- April 15-May 31 – Statewide spring turkey hunting season
- April 20-21 – 2022 Chehalis Basin Aquatic Species Restoration Plan Symposium
- April 22 – Discover Pass Free Day: Earth Day
- May 1 – Puget Sound/Strait (MA 5 to 11 and 13 only) lingcod fishing opener
- May 1-4 – Pathways: Human Dimensions of Wildlife Conference and Training Program
- May 5 – Coastal/western Strait (MA 1 to 5) halibut fishing opener
- May 28 – Skykomish River opens for hatchery Chinook salmon and steelhead. Many other Washington rivers and streams open for trout fishing, check regulations for details.
- June 11-12 – Free Fishing Weekend in Washington

CELEBRATE A LIFE LIVED OUTDOORS

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