

REEL LIFE



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GET THE LEAD OUT

Photo by Tony Rezanow

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Spring is definitely here! From my desk I'm looking out over a field of winter wheat that is just beginning to shoot tiny green plants skyward. The large herds of deer are beginning to scatter into the hills to be replaced by gophers digging up holes in my backyard. Welcome to spring in Montana...

This is the time of year that anglers dust off rods that may have not seen the light of day for months. Time to get serious about planning trips and making those winter dreams become reality.

This issue, Hannah and Jason share solid 101 information on topics like selecting the right rod and reel, and for the kokanee fans, Randy dives into lead lining (hint, you need to add this to your kokanee arsenal!), and I take a closer look at kokanee attractors. Matt explores the importance of the Multipurpose Fishing Trip. All that and more should get your fishing energy on a high level! See you on the water!

Mike Carey - mikec@nwfishing.net @Michael Carey Northwest Fishing

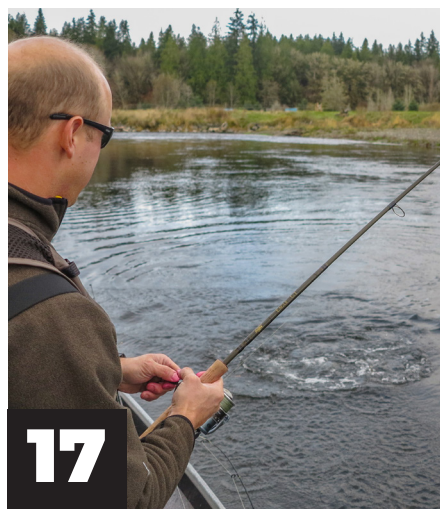


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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Carey

PUBLISHER

Rob Holman

COPY EDITOR

Hannah Pennebaker

CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Brooks

Randy Castello

Hannah Pennebaker

Gary Lewis

Mike Carey

Hillary Holman

Chad Bryson

Matt Carey

Mike Schmuck

Gary Gordon

TEAM NWF (NWFTV)

Robby Sy

Hillary Holman

Eric Magnuson

Paul Hamilton

Luke Hatfield

Barry Dubnow

Hannah Pennebaker

Randy Castello

Matt Carey

Chris Decker

ARTICLE SUBMISSION INQUIRIES

mikec@nwfishing.net

COVER PHOTO

Tony Rezanow

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COHO MEDIA GROUP

CREATIVE DIRECTOR/ LEAD GRAPHICS

Jason Olsen

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Jason Olsen, Isidro Rojas, Sarah Holman

ADVERTISING

ericm@nwfishing.net

ACCOUNTING

Natalie Ackerman

PROJECT MANAGER

Hillary Holman



Northwest Fishing
12904 E. Nora Ave Suite B
Spokane Valley WA 99216

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Mother's Day Fishing Trip

By Hillary Holman

Last year for Mother's Day I met up with my two daughters to fish Dworshak Reservoir in the Clearwater Valley for Monster Bass.

My eldest daughter Cameron had recently returned home from Temple University in Tokyo to attend WSU in Pullman, and Sarah had come back from PLU to attend Whitworth University in Spokane, both due to unforeseen complications associated with the pandemic.

Paul "the Bait Boy" Hamilton, and Sarah carpooled down from Spokane to Lewiston and Cameron scooted over from Pullman to meet Rob and I at the Clearwater Casino. It was the final leg of a spring fishing road trip with Rob.

We traveled the back roads through Waittsburg from the

Tri Cities area, and found some great smoked cheese and meat at Mr C's. We stocked up on snacks and hit the road to meet up with our posse in Lewiston by dinner time. It was a good 6 hour drive from The Dalles to Lewison, taking the scenic route, aka the shortcut.

Lenore Lodge, operated by Toby Wyatt, is situated on the way to Dworshak and was our lodging in the area. We often stay here when fishing with Reel Time Fishing on the Clearwater. The girls were impressed upon arrival. There was plenty of room, a great kitchen and a game room. The view of the river is nice. It was easy for the girls to unwind, unplug and relax. Cameron prepared a charcuterie board of the many meats and cheeses from Mr. C's, that we bought along the way.

The next morning brought much excitement. There were winding roads and beautiful scenery.

To see the wonder in my girls' eyes again, as if they were little, gave me the greatest joy. Their curiosity and willingness to explore with us was wonderful. We looked out the windows and snapped pictures at the scenery. The Dam was a marvel. Hidden back in the Valley of the Clearwater, the monolithic dam is a sight to behold.

Arriving at the reservoir, we were greeted by Travis Wendt, of Reel Time Fishing. We were on the hunt for Jumbo Bass that are said to inhabit the huge lake created behind the huge Dworshak Dam. It was a beautiful clear day and not another boat was in sight. Travis knows this water well.

"The reservoir is deep and steep," as he says, and letting your lead soft plastic baits sink to the bottom is paramount for success. Casting was right up our alley. Sitting on the bow of the boat tossing out lines on a clear spring day with my kids was exactly what I needed.

We took a lunch break and hit the shore, a hidden cove with a stream pouring from the rocky bank. Travis fired up the BBQ and us gals hit the shore for some much needed exploring. The hills were draped in green from the spring rain and runoff. We sat on top of a hill and looked down at the men doing their manly banter on the boat with the roaring smoke from BBQ as Travis prepared for lunch. The girls hopped up and set out to the creek to watch and listen to the streaming water down the rocks on the hillside. I watched and they jumped from one side of the falls to the other. Each was snapping pictures of the other. Capturing each moment as it came.

After lunch, we got to work. Paul, Rob and Travis were machines in procedure. They sent their plastics out at just the right spot, waiting for the right angle for the lead to hit the bottom. Cameron had enough time fishing and was ready for Mom to pass her the Camera to film the rest of the bass episode. She was ready to take the reins.

The rest of the afternoon I spent fishing. Not worrying about getting the camera shot. Not worrying about the camera at all. Sarah would take turns with Cameron, but for the most part, she fished right alongside me. We hammered 'em.

We gave it everything we had and stayed as long as we could, even with the rain setting in. The girls were troopers. They came prepared with the right gear to withstand the spring day with unpredictable weather.

In the end, we caught some great sized bass and perch. We didn't catch a monster, but we had fun. We saw a waterfall, beautiful scenery, the dam, and I got to reconnect with my girls after 2 long years apart. The boys were gracious and patient. The lunch was perfect. I could not have asked for a better day for Mother's Day. Ok, maybe next time to have my son along for the trip is my only ask.

So, if you are wondering what your mom, wife or daughter may enjoy for Mother's Day, consider taking them fishing. A trip we don't have to plan and a meal we don't have to cook or cleanup is all we hope for! The fishing, now that's a bonus!

This article is dedicated to my Loving Mother Jerri Lee Cole.

Who taught me to work hard and play outside. To teach my children well!

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NYMPHING FOR TROUT



BY CHAD BRYSON

In the glamorously romanticized world of social media, there is nothing short of a plethora of fly fishing techniques and methodology. So many opinions, and it seems that everyone thinks they are right. Even though I am never one to be short on opinion, I prefer to stick to facts and truth. That's where I try to form my opinion.

Fact- every single person that is an angler loves to watch a fish of any species come to the surface to eat something presented to them. The surface bite is a visual interaction we as humans get to experience with an animal that we would hardly ever see otherwise. It's cool beyond belief. Truth- that bite doesn't happen every day. It doesn't even happen every month. Okay, sure, if you have your own jet with an unlimited amount of expendable income, you can travel all over four continents and two hemispheres chasing every bug hatch or mouse migration known to man to satisfy your craving for surface action. If you are that person, I want you to know that I am interviewing for new friends, and you could just be a candidate.

However, if you are like

the rest of us who can't afford the financial commitment of owning our own jet, you are probably trying to enjoy the fishing that's close to home and might be wondering what all the complicated fuss is about. I'm going to simplify it.

Fly fishing for trout is broken down into basically three methods - streamer fishing, nymph fishing and dry fly fishing. Dry fly fishing is by far the most celebrated and commonly recognizable. It's the gentleman's preferred fishing method. Streamer fishing is regarded as a viable means of catching but, like dry fly fishing, isn't always the most productive. Then there is nymph fishing bringing up the rear in open popularity. I call it open popularity only because you never hear guys in a fly shop talking about how awesome the nymph bite was the past weekend that they went fishing. Everyone just wants to discuss how many bugs hatched or how many trout chased a streamer. Nymphing for trout is easily the most effective way to catch them, but this technique is often only regarded as a last-ditch effort to save a day of fishing.

The most important question to answer is: why? Why is nymphing for trout the most productive way to catch them? First, let's identify what a nymph is. A nymph is the juvenile form of aquatic insect that is born below the river's surface and makes its way to the surface either by crawling or swimming so that it may hatch into an adult and fly away. Once the nymph reaches the water's surface and begins to shed its exoskeleton, it is at the mercy of wind, rain or anything above the surface that could potentially keep it from flying away. Hence, keeping a trout from being able to eat it from the surface like so many of us want. Every river, creek, and waterway anywhere that holds trout will have aquatic insects of some species. In that watershed is the nymph form of that aquatic insect. They live there 24/7, 52 weeks a year beneath rocks, logs, stumps, and anything else that could be considered hold area. Nymphs are always in the river for trout to feed on. Every single day. They may not always be hatching, swimming or crawling, but no doubt, nymphs are around, and they comprise 90% of a trout's diet. We just rarely see them eat one because it's all done subsurface.

Fact- nymphs are 90% of a trout's primary diet because it is a food source that is the most readily available in every creek, river, and water shed that holds trout. Also, a trout doesn't have to expose itself to the surface to eat a nymph like it does a dry fly. It can remain relatively hidden from predators while feeding on nymphs. Imagine you are sitting on your couch watching baseball. You get hungry and need a snack. Next to the couch within arm's reach is a bag of beef jerky and a sack of Doritos. Cool Ranch Doritos at that. Now you could just sit there comfortably and feast on those Doritos and beef jerky until your heart's content, or you could get up and go to the kitchen and make yourself some proper food such as a ribeye steak. Even though the ribeye steak sounds really good, it's gonna take some time to prepare and cook. You also run the risk of being caught away from your safety zone

of anonymity. If you are in the kitchen, the dog is gonna see you and demand attention. Your wife or husband may realize that you are mobile instead of semi-comatose on the couch. God forbid you may have to fix a ribeye for them too. Next thing you know, the baseball game is over, and you are doing the dishes. Truth- dry flies are ribeye steaks while Doritos and beef jerky are nymphs.

No discussion about nymph fishing for trout would be complete without the controversial subject of bobbers vs strike indicators. In the world of fly fishing, someone that wanted to make themselves dissimilar from gear fishermen decided to call the thing we use to make the flies float at a specific depth below the surface a "strike indicator". I suppose that is a more refined and highbrowed form of language that some fly anglers are known to have. My opinion is quite simple. If it floats and is made of a synthetic material such as foam or plastic, it's a bobber. If it floats and is made of natural material, such as wool, it's an indicator. Trust me when I say that both have their place in the game. Just call it what it is.

I learned to fly fish before the invention of indicators and bobbers. We "high sticked" when nymph fishing. This was basically using a rod that was about a foot longer than the rod I used for dry flies paired with a little stronger leader and a heavy nymph at the end of it. The idea was to "roll" the nymph along the bottom of the riverbed imitating a nymph that had been dislodged from its safety zone. As long as the line was tight, you could feel the trout take. I caught so many big trout using this method, my grandfather finally limited me to using it only on rainy days. "Just to keep things even", he said. If you can learn to highstick nymph, it will crush fish. Just don't confuse it with this new thing the kids are doing called euro nymphing, that's not fly fishing. Any good fly-fishing guide will agree with me.

So, watch a YouTube video about high stick nymphing, hire a guide, and find out what a trout eats 90% of the time. Don't forget the Doritos and beef jerky.



The Ins and Outs of Fishing Reels

By Hannah Pennnebaker

The salesman asked, “spinning or casting?” As we looked at the case full of shiny new fishing reels, I remembered what it was like to be a beginner fisherman who had no idea which reel was right for me. It can be a truly overwhelming, confusing mess if you don’t know what you’re looking for. My neighbors said they had been interested in fishing for years, but had no idea how to get started. Rather than getting a dozen different rods and reels, they wanted a setup that would handle most of the types of fishing in the northwest. Intrigued by the challenge, I volunteered to take them to the local sporting goods store to pick out rods and reels. They had given me an idea of their budget, but that was it. They had no idea what type, brand, or size of reel they wanted. I walked them through the basics and let them test out several different reels within their budget. They made their choices, and a week later we tested their setups out on surf perch in Ocean Shores. Not everyone has the luxury of an experienced fisherman to walk them through the ins and outs of fishing reels at the local sporting goods store. I’ll do my best to provide an in-depth guide to each reel type and their uses. We’ll talk about spinning reels, baitcasters, conventional reels, spincast reels, and mooching reels. Even experienced fishermen might find a new reel type to try out!

Spinning Reels

Spinning reels are probably the most common reel out there, and for good reason. They are extremely versatile, easy to take apart for maintenance, and often inexpensive. You can use spinning reels for just about any kind of fishing you can imagine. They are great for ultralight fishing tiny jigs for crappie as well as fighting giant tuna. If you intend to use them for saltwater fishing, make sure they are sealed, however. Saltwater is hard on reels, and you want to make sure it stays out of the inner workings of the reel. There’s no need to find a left- or right-handed spinning reel, most have interchangeable handle sides. As I mentioned, spinning reels are extremely diverse. You can get heavy ones made out of metal that can withstand getting banged up on jetties, or you can get light, smooth ones that are perfect for finesse fishing, such as drop shotting. Do your research and compare reels at the store to find out your preference. Higher end reels are going to generally have better drag systems and be constructed of more sturdy and lightweight materials such as aluminum. Consider the size of reel you need as well. 1000 is suited for crappie and other panfish. 2000 to 3000 is perfect for trout. 3000 to 5000 is great for salmon. 6000 to 10000 are used for crab snaring and tuna fishing. Spinning reels are a great all-around option with no major downsides. They are great for beginners and experts alike.

Baitcasters

The choice of many avid bass anglers, baitcasters are a bit more complicated to use than spinning reels, but offer many advantages to the serious angler. Your choice in reels is most likely going to come down to spinning or casting. With a baitcaster, you can precisely dial in your casts, since you can easily brake the spool with your thumb. This is handy for bass fishing, when you need to cast extremely accurately. It's also easier to use topwater lures, since you can slow down the lure and make it hit the water with less force. Baitcasters also excel at casting lures with little to no weight, such as wacky rigged senkos. Baitcasters also have a larger line capacity and tend to be lighter than comparable spinning reels. They are a popular choice for these reasons. The major downside to baitcasters is that if you don't have the drag or barrel brake set properly, you can get a huge knot, or bird's nest, while casting. This happens when the spool spins faster than the line goes out, creating a bunch of slack in the line, which tangles and prevents you from letting line out. Make sure to get a few practice casts in and dial in your drag and barrel brake. You'll need to do this any time you change the weight of your lure. Baitcasters also tend to be on the more expensive side. They are not a great choice for beginners, since they require dialing in some settings and can cause annoying backlashes, but baitcasters are still a great option for experienced anglers. You can use them for trolling for trout, salmon, and walleye, as well as casting for bass, surf perch, and bottomfish. If you intend to use them for trolling, baitcasters with line counters are key!

Conventional Reels

The difference between conventional reels and baitcasters isn't always clear. Some argue that they're one and the same, others say the difference is that one has a button and the other does not. Typically, baitcasters will engage

the drag and start reeling when you reel the handle after casting, but a conventional reel will not, and must be manually flipped to start reeling in line. Conventional reels are a type of open-face reel that is simple, reliable, and tough. They may or may not have a levelwind. Some fishermen use them for casting, but most Northwesterners use them for trolling. They have a powerful drag system and can handle heavy weights, but they're often heavier than spinning or casting reels.

Spincast Reels

If you grew up fishing with a Barbie or Spiderman pole, chances are it had a spincast reel on it. These reels are similar to baitcasters in that you simply push a button to free spool and cast your line, but the spool is encased in a cover. This can be both a blessing and a curse, because if your kid tangles their line, it's difficult to fix. However, spincast reels are very light and simple. Drag systems involve simply adjusting a dial above the button. Spincast reels can help kids learn to cast, since all they have to do is press and release a button.

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Mooching Reels

Mooching reels are a very niche type of reel, but they're a ton of fun to use! They are typically used for salmon fishing in saltwater. You can either use them for mooching, as their name suggests, or for trolling. You can definitely get away with using a spinning reel, baitcaster, or conventional reel for mooching or trolling, but there's something special about using a mooching reel. When you're on a big fish that's pulling drag, the handles will spin backwards and rap you on the knuckles if you don't get your hand off them quickly enough! They are commonly referred to as "knucklebusters" for this reason. Don't let that scare you, though. They have a 1:1 gear ratio, so you'll truly feel the fight of the fish. You'll feel every headshake and run as you battle the fish to your net. Knucklebusters have a small but devoted following in the Pacific Northwest. Match them with a 9 to 10 ft rod with moderate to heavy action, and you're in business. Give them a try and you'll be hooked!

Whether you pick up a spinning reel, baitcaster, conventional reel, spincast, or mooching reel, having fun out on the water is the most important thing! May is a great time to try out most fisheries in the northwest.

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KOKANEE ATTRACTORS 101

BY MIKE CAREY

If you're new to trolling for kokanee, the sheer variety of attractors out there can be overwhelming. One walk through a well-stocked sporting goods store can leave the new kokanee angler scratching his or her head in confusion. So many different shapes, colors, and styles can make a head spin. Knowing the difference between the various types of kokanee attractors is vital in using them correctly. The proper application of the attractors you use can make the difference between a productive day or one of frustration.

First, just what is an attractor? Simply put, an attractor is a device that is placed in front of a lure to both give the lure action, and also to attract fish from a distance closer so they can zero in on the bait. Attractors can be both visual and vibrational, activating the lateral lines on fish that alert them of wounded baitfish, and creating flashes of light that fish see as schools of baitfish.

KOKANEE ATTRACTORS

- just like their bigger brothers, salmon attractors - are designed to attract fish to the bait that you are dragging behind them. Selecting the right combination of attractor and lure and using them correctly will increase your odds of catching kokanee significantly.

Let's take a closer look at the different shapes of attractors and how to apply them to your piscatorial pursuits.

When kokanee fishing, the primary challenge is to find what speed the fish are interested in. Some days a dead slow troll is effective, other days, or even times of day, a faster troll will activate a bite. Figuring out what kokanee want is really the number one job of a kokanee troller. Discovering that out can be incredibly satisfying!

Attractors can be broken down into a few major styles. The shapes will dictate how to use them most effectively. For kokanee fishing, we can group attractors into the following categories:

dodgers, sling blades, gang trolls, and rotators.

At this point all the salmon anglers are saying "what about flashers?". Without a doubt, flashers are the number one attractor for saltwater salmon anglers. While kokanee are land-locked sockeye salmon, you will seldom hear of flashers being used in kokanee fishing. The reason for this is that kokanee anglers tend to troll at slower speeds which do not allow a flasher to rotate as they are designed to do. Without that rotation, a flasher is nothing more than a dodger, swaying back and forth.

That's not to say they wouldn't work, and I have seen smaller flashers made which could work for kokanee, but in general, most anglers will not be trolling at the 2.7mph or so it takes to make a flasher rotate.

The shape of your attractor determines the application, and speed is the key. Let's take a look at each shape and see how to best use it for kokanee trolling.

THE DODGER

Dodgers are designed to do exactly what their name sounds like – dodge back and forth. Tie a fly or lure behind one and the dodger will swing it back and forth. The shorter the leader from the lure to the dodger, the greater will be the snap action as the lure is pulled back and forth. Dodgers work best at slow to medium speeds, say .8 to 1.4 mph. Slower than that and you have a non-activated lure, which at times may actually be effective, faster than that and your dodger will turn into a flasher, rotating in a tight circle, not giving your lure much action, either.

THE SLING BLADE

Sling blades are ideal for faster trolling, say 1.2 to 1.8 mph. The shape of the blade, narrow in front, wide in back, allow for a faster troll without turning over. As such, if your gear is not getting strikes going slow, using a sling blade and upping the speed a bit can be just the ticket. Sling blades can be long and narrow, short and fat, or anywhere in-between. Sling blades are by far the most popular of kokanee attractors, and for good reason. With a wide range of styles and ability to be used at both slower and faster trolls, they offer a great deal of flexibility. Putting a slight bend in the blade can cause further erratic action which can trigger kokanee to strike.

THE GANG TROLL

Gang trolls have a long and well-established reputation as an effective attractor. Unlike dodgers and sling blades, gang trolls do not impart any action to your lure. What they will do is create a great amount of flash and vibration in the water, drawing fish in to then see your lure. Gang trolls can be metal blades, plastic, or the more recent mylar blades with reflective tape. No matter which type you use, the first fish you catch you'll see their major (in my opinion) downfall. Gang trolls kill the fight of a fish. If your goal is to enjoy the fight of your catch, look elsewhere. If your goal is to catch fish, gang trolls can be deadly effective.

THE ROTATOR

Rotators are similar to gang trolls in that they do not add action to your lure. What they do is rotate inline, causing flash and vibration in the water. Small rotators are hard to come by but do offer an effective trolling option and I recommend you have a few in your toolbox.

What lure or bait you put behind your attractor is an article in itself. That said, a few general guidelines are helpful. These are suggestions only. Experimentation is part of the fun of kokanee trolling, so my advice is to try variations and see what works for you. You may discover a whole new set up that works!

Dodgers and sling blades, since they are designed to impart action, work best with a leader length of 6-20 inches to your lure. Closer will cause more erratic action. Lures which have no action of their own are good choices, such as micro hoochies.

Rotators and gang trolls impart no action, so lures like small, thin blade spoons and spinners 2-4 feet behind them are what anglers will often run.

As you gain experience trolling for kokanee, you'll begin to get a sense of what works and what doesn't. Don't be afraid to ask fellow anglers for advice. You'll find the majority of anglers are more than willing to give you tips and advice, which some day you in turn can share with the next generation of anglers!



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FINDING THE RIGHT FISHING ROD

BY JASON BROOKS

Almost three decades ago, I learned the importance of using the correct fishing rod, and how important the rod is as a tool to catch more fish. It was a bright July day, and we were fishing the Cowlitz River for summer steelhead. I was with two friends, both of whom were well seasoned steelhead anglers, but I was not. Having grown up in North Central Washington, steelhead were but an anomaly back in the 80's and 90's. Instead, we trolled for trout and chased summer chinook by casting spoons and pulling plugs, but we never really had to “feel the bite” like you do for summer steelhead.

Throughout the day, my two friends kept hooking fish while I did not get a single bite, or at least I did not think I did. After breaking off the leader while in a good run, one of my friends told me to grab his spare rod, already rigged up and ready to go with bait. I put down my rod and grabbed his, cast it out, and within seconds had a bite and set the hook. Once that fish was landed, I mentioned how quickly I felt the fish bite

and that it was my first bite of the day. Both friends politely informed me that I had been getting bites all day, but I just did not know it, calling my fishing rod a “broomstick”. I was using a cheap rod, one that fit my budget at the time, but also cost me fish as it was not sensitive enough for me to notice the bite. The rod my friend handed me was a Lamiglas Certified Pro, a “mid-priced” rod for that brand, but known to be extremely sensitive and a good value compared to the higher end models.

Price is probably the most noticeable point when it comes to a fishing rod. Those that do not fish, and even a few that do, often ask why quality fishing rods cost so much. Yes, there are exceptionally good rods on the market that do not cost what some of the “top of the line” models do, but they are usually made in foreign countries where quality control might not be as tight as some American made rods.

There is a saying, “buy cheap, buy twice” which means those that try to look for a bargain often end up buying the more expensive rod after they have a few days like the one I had on the Cowlitz all those years ago. The high price of a rod is mostly due to a few variables, the first being quality control with quality materials. The next cost factor is that you are not just paying for the rod, but also for research and development that went into designing, testing, and building of the rod. A company cannot improve their products without testing and developing them first. They have paid employees that do this, such as engineers to design, make, and maintain the machines that manufacture the rods, and then of course the engineers whose knowledge goes into rod design. Everyone needs a paycheck and when you buy that rod you are becoming part of the process, one that will also help improve the next model or design of rod. Warranties also cost and some high-end rods are factoring in the warranty for when anglers do break a rod and get a “free”

replacement. That replacement cannot really be free but instead is added into the overall costs. Then there is shipping the rods to stores, advertising, and of course the store’s overhead, which all must be added to the costs of each rod.

So now that you know why some rods cost so much, then ask how some rods can be reasonable in price and still have most of the same attributes of a high-end rod. This is mostly because those rods are a few years behind in technology, and either patents run out so they can be copied, or consumer demand is finally high enough that a large company can outsource the building of the rods to foreign labor, making the building part of the rod less expensive, and mass produce the rod. Profit margins can be smaller, and this means a less expensive rod for the angler, but think about quality control and rod materials. Of course, these rods can and do catch fish, so should you feel guilty for buying a rod made in some foreign country?



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That is up to you, but it is understandable why one would buy such a rod, with some American made rods costing two and even three times as much as the others.

When it comes time to pick out the rod you plan to buy, you need to understand how the rod is designed or what its purpose is for. The first two factors that must be taken into consideration when purchasing the correct rod are what type of fish you are planning on catching, and what technique you are going to use to catch them. Take for example the twitching rod, often used to catch coho, but also good for chinook, chums, and even the occasional winter steelhead. Since it is mostly used for coho, the rod needs enough power to haul in a 12 to 18-pound fish, pulling it out of a log jam, and to the net. It also needs a soft tip, or fast action, to give that jig the right action as it falls, and so you can feel the slightest resistance when the fish grabs the jig, often done on the drop. Again, that power needs to be strong enough to set the hook quickly. And then there is the length of the rod- most twitching rods are 7'6" to 7'9" as this is the right balance for twitching without causing wrist fatigue. Years ago, just as twitching rods were coming onto the market, I was still using a medium action 8'6" drift fishing rod and did well until my wrist hurt so bad that I had to stop fishing for the day. Yes, some rods are "multi-purpose", but if you plan to use a specific technique you will always do better with the right tool for

the job, or the rod designed for that type of fishing.

Float fishing is popular amongst salmon and steelhead anglers, and since the technique is pretty much the same if you are floating cured roe or a jig, you can use the same rod. The idea of float fishing is to cast out a line with a sliding float and a weight to get the bait or lure down to the depth of the fish, and then let it naturally drift downstream. To do this you need to be able to mend the line, which is to pick the line up off the water and pull or flip it upstream, allowing some slack above the float. If the line gets pulled downstream in the current, it often speeds up the float and bait or lure and it is not a natural presentation. To mend the line, you need an exceptionally long rod so you can lift the line up off the water. Most float rods are 10 ½ to 12 feet long, with a medium heavy to heavy action or "power" as you do not need to feel the bite, but you need to set the hook hard.

Spoon and spinner fishing is much like drift fishing as far as casting out a lure, letting it drift along and catch in the current as it swings across the river. One main difference is that most bites on the spoon or spinner are violent grabs by the fish and you can feel them easily. There are a few times that the bite is more of a pause but then again you can feel that with a quality graphite or glass rod. However, the drift angler needs to be able to

tell the difference between a bite and the weight bouncing off a rock. This is where my broomstick failed me all those years ago. If there is one technique where the rod is the most valuable tool to catch fish, it is in drift fishing. This style of fishing is also one of the most common and one of the ways most salmon and steelhead anglers learn to fish. It can be very frustrating to go out fishing and not get a bite, or worse, get a bite and not know it. Do not skimp on the drift fishing rod. An extremely sensitive, moderate to fast action rod in 8 ½ to 9 ½ feet is necessity. Again, the river you plan on fishing will determine the specifics of the rod.

Years ago, when the Frazier River in British Columbia still had a return on sockeye in the tens-of-millions (yes, millions) I found myself standing shoulder to shoulder in the glacial waters with zero visibility, drift fishing “wool” as they call it in B.C. It was the basic drift fishing of a piece of yarn, sometimes with a Lil Corky, but mostly just a piece of yarn and an awfully long leader.

2-ounce cannonball weights and bouncing them along as if they were a 2-inch piece of pencil lead. For this trip I was using a 12-foot extra heavy spinning rod. It would cast 100 yards easily and handle the swift currents as well as the occasional chinook, pulling it in while never needing to yell, “fish on, coming down” like most anglers do on any given pink salmon river in the Pacific Northwest. It was the right tool for the job, and one I bought specifically for this trip. It cost a few hundred dollars and that is expensive for a rod that will be scarcely used. It has found a new fishery now that the Frazier is pretty much closed to sockeye fishing, and that is along the ocean beaches as a surf perch rod. Again, ask yourself what type of fish you are planning on catching, and what technique you will be using. Surf perch does not require a heavy action rod, but casting the heavy weights out past the rolling waves does. Be sure to pick the right rod you plan to use and buy the best quality one you can afford, otherwise you will likely be buying twice.

The advertisement features a man on the left and a woman and a young boy on the right, all smiling and holding large fish. The man is wearing a black jacket, orange gloves, and a cap that says 'PRO-CURE BAIT SCENTS'. The woman is wearing a blue jacket and a blue cap. The boy is wearing a blue jacket and a blue cap. They are standing in front of a background of mountains and water. The text 'YOUR PREMIERE PNW FISHING GUIDE SERVICE' is at the top. Below it is a red fish logo and the text 'Austin's Northwest Adventures'. At the bottom, it says 'Now Booking: Walleye, Sockeye, Summer Chinook', 'Call 509-669-3557 to book!', 'www.austinsnorthwestadventures.com', and 'Austin Moser, Professional Guide and Instructor'. A red triangle in the bottom right corner contains the text 'Great for families and corporate trips!'.



THE MULTIPURPOSE FISHING TRIP

BY MATT CAREY

I have to start off this article with the obvious: I love reeling in the trophy fish as much as the next guy. My trophy case might be a little bare, but that's beside the point. If there's an opportunity to get into a big fish, I am as excited as anyone. The reality is we don't always end our fishing trips with those monsters. Sometimes we're lucky to even get a bite all day. Maybe what's even more disheartening than the slow, sporadic bite with a few lost fish here and there is the one fish you do land that ends up a fishing tale for the wrong reasons. That one guppy you sling over the side of the boat. The fish you're talking up as you reel in. "It might have some weight behind those shoulders" ... "Last time we were here I hooked into

that (insert exaggerated size fish), you all remember that one...!" I have my issues, and giving my buddies more ammunition than they already have by way of an embarrassing fish doesn't have to be on the list!

So, what do we do with our time on the water when the fishing isn't as great as we hoped? I think some of the best parts about fishing are all the extras that come with it. I don't mean different gear or setups. I don't mean using a drift boat versus one with multiple props. I don't even mean the variety of species out in the water. I think about the extras associated with fishing that make for lasting memories. The kind of fishing trip where you look back and remember the fishing and everything else. Time with friends or family.

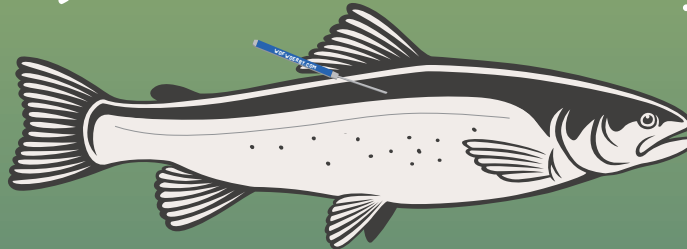
The time spent on the shore with kids or pets. When you combine a fishing trip that has a great time on the water with a great time on the land, it's hard to beat anything else.

Cooney Reservoir outside of Billings, MT comes to my mind when I think about this multipurpose fishing trip. My in-laws had something of a family reunion planned for the summer. Within their immediate family, my wife and her siblings, kids etc. there are almost 20 people. The reservoir is for some a 30-minute drive and others an hour and half drive. Manageable for everybody. Being the only boat owner in the group, we agreed to bring our Klamath. Not a grandiose vessel, but reliable, and a good opportunity to



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let the nieces and nephews get some exposure to fishing and boating. I brought some fishing gear that is pretty user friendly. Spinning reels with plugs and jigs. Open the spool, cast the line. So simple, kids could do it. Between taking turns getting everyone out on the water who wanted to go and practicing patience with other people's kids, the fishing left something to be desired. Still, we caught a few nice perch and I was able to get my brother-in-law and his kids on a few more bites. Here's where the "extras" come in.

Seeing jet skis, pontoons and other larger boats pull skiers and tubers led to some envy among the kids in our camp. We did have a little raft that could get hooked up to the boat, some rope, life vests, flags (remember this part in a second), and enough power in the motor to at least tug along kids wanting to enjoy the tubing action. So, I turned over the keys and let my brother-in-law take a spin with his kids. On land I was enjoying some BBQ, swimming in the shallows with those on

shore, and enjoying a typical day at the beach. Some time to chat with my in-laws, watching my dog swim and chase after a ball. All the extras that can go into a great fishing trip. Sometimes our fishing trips don't have to be about limiting out or bragging rights. I had just as much fun on the shore as I did out on the boat. The experience of being with others is as important as the fish you catch. Or, even more important. Fishing itself can be a small part of a great memory and we as outdoorsmen/women cannot understate that.

Oh, and the flag? Well, a miscommunication happened between my brother-in-law and I which led to a "friendly" conversation between him and a game warden about needing to use the flag when someone is in the water. I swear I told him, but he swears he didn't hear me say anything about it. Thankfully it wasn't a huge issue, and everything turned out fine. It's a friendly talking point for me when I have some lighthearted banter I need to call back to.

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Editor's Note: Thanks to Mike Schmuck, WDFW District 5 Fisheries Biologist — WDFW Region Two for this great list of places for you to explore in Washington's Grant County

MARTHA LAKE AND UPPER CALICHE

LAKE: These lakes, near the town of George, WA, should produce well in spring 2020. In addition to fingerling Rainbow Trout, both lakes received 1,000 11–13-inch Rainbow Trout in fall 2019 and these fish should be in the 14–15-inch range this spring. These lakes also received 1,000 (Martha) and 500 (Upper Caliche) catchable Rainbow Trout in April 2020.

QUINCY LAKE: Over the years this rather popular lake, located on the Quincy Wildlife Area, has provided anglers with good catches of 11–13-inch trout as well as the occasional carry-over fish that can often be in excess of 14 inches. Quincy Lake fished well in early March 2020 with several fish caught in the 18–20-inch range. WDFW hatchery staff will be stocking nearly 1,000 Rainbow Trout into Quincy Lake in preparation for the May 5th re-opening. These fish are just over a pound each and will provide excellent opportunities for anglers.

BURKE LAKE: Burke Lake, a next-door neighbor to Quincy Lake, underwent a chemical rehabilitation in the fall of 2019 in order to remove nuisance Yellow Perch and Pumpkinseed Sunfish. WDFW Hatchery staff

stocked 3,000 9–11-inch Rainbow Trout into Burke Lake in late-February. Burke Lake will be receiving 1,000 Rainbow Trout in preparation for the May 5th re-opening. These fish are just over a pound each and will provide excellent opportunities for anglers. Burke Lake received very little fishing pressure in early March and should provide excellent fishing for the remainder of the season.

QUINCY WILDLIFE AREA WALK-IN-

LAKES: While Quincy and Burke Lake get the lion's share of fishing pressure, there are several small walk-in lakes just west of these two popular fisheries. Crystal, Spring, Cup, Lloyd and Scout Lakes are not on many anglers' radar—but they should be. These lakes receive annual stockings of fingerling Rainbow Trout from Columbia Basin Hatchery and often provide anglers with solitude and big fish. In early March I talked to one angler who caught two 21-inch Rainbows from one of these lakes—I promised not to tell which lake they came from. Scout Lake is a mile north of the remaining lakes on this list and is 530 yards west of the H-Lake parking lot. Those looking to social distance should keep these lakes in mind.

PING POND (AKA OASIS PARK POND): This 2+ acre pond located at the south end of Ephrata is open to Juvenile Anglers (under 15 yrs. old), Senior Anglers (at least 70 yrs. old) and Anglers with a Disability who possess

a designated harvester companion card. WDFW hatchery staff stocked 30–40 Jumbo (3 lb.) Rainbow trout and 200 12–14-inch Rainbow Trout into Ping Pond on May 1 in order to give kids a fun opportunity to catch some nice fish.

PARK AND BLUE LAKES: These lakes are two of Grant County's top trout waters and both should fish well this spring. Catch rates were lower than anticipated on opening day 2019; however, this was likely due to high winds that kept many anglers off the water. Despite relentless winds, catch rates averaged 3 trout per angler on both lakes. Anglers should expect good catches of rainbow trout in the 12–14-inch range as well as some 2+ year-old 'carry-over fish', in the 15–17-inch range. Brown Trout and Tiger Trout are also stocked in both lakes.

VIC MEYERS LAKE: This 12-acre lake located in Sun Lakes State Park receives a fair amount of fishing pressure and produces Rainbow Trout to 17–18 inches. The lake has excellent shore access and is a good choice

for anglers looking to get away from crowds.

PERCH LAKE: Another lake in Sun Lakes State Park, Perch Lake has limited shore fishing but is ideal for someone with a small boat or float tube. I visited Perch Lake numerous times in 2019 and never encountered an angler. I did, however, see a lot of trout rising in the evenings and believe this lake should fish well. Perch Lake receives 9,200 fingerling Rainbow Trout each year; however, in 2020 we reduced this significantly due to low angler effort. Low harvest on these fish will increase food competition and limit growth for remaining fish. A lack of large fish in this population will further limit the popularity of this fishery.

DEEP LAKE: Deep Lake is a good choice for anglers looking for great scenery and good fishing. While not known for an abundance of large fish, Deep Lake produces Rainbow Trout in the 11–13-inch range, and a few carry-over fish close to 16 inches. Anglers wishing to troll, or simply fish a little deeper, can also catch Kokanee.

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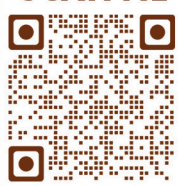


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Each year, WDFW hatchery staff stock Deep Lake with 13,500 spring fingerling Kokanee. In addition, Deep Lake also receives 15,000, 11–13-inch Rainbow Trout from Trout Lodge Fish Hatchery.

WARDEN LAKE: Warden Lake is a popular trout lake, but in recent years it has been producing excellent catches of Yellow Perch and bass. Warden Lake receives 65,000 spring fingerling Rainbow Trout, 7,000 spring fingerling Tiger Trout and 15,000 6–9-inch Rainbow Trout each year. In early spring 2020, Warden Lake was stocked with 3,300 12–13-inch Rainbow Trout from Trout Lodge in late March. To provide more opportunity, WDFW hatchery staff stocked an additional 2,200 Rainbow Trout into Warden in late-April. Anglers should expect excellent trout fishing once lakes reopen.

POTHOLES SEEP LAKES: Several lakes south of Potholes Reservoir can produce good catches of Rainbow Trout as well as Bass, Bluegill, Black Crappie and Yellow Perch.

CORRAL LAKE: This lake is located near the southwestern end of O'Sullivan Dam just across the road from the MarDon Resort. Corral is a good choice for anglers that don't mind a mixed bag of good size Rainbow Trout, Largemouth Bass or Black Crappie. Bring your boat to explore this lake fully—shore access is limited.

PILLAR-WIDGEON CHAIN: These walk-in lakes on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge are consistent producers of quality Rainbow Trout. This chain of lakes receives

spring fingerling Rainbow Trout and are a popular destination for anglers looking for a quiet day on the water.

HAMPTON LAKES: The Hampton Lakes have fished well over recent years. Lower Hampton Lake receives more angler effort and while catch rates are somewhat lower than on Upper Hampton, the fish caught there are larger. Since the 2014 rotenone treatment of the Hampton Lakes, Pumpkinseed Sunfish

have recovered to a point where they are negatively affecting growth of fingerling rainbow trout.

TEAL LAKES: The Teal Lakes, located along the Seep Lakes Road on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, are a popular fishery for anglers looking to catch good sized trout. Both lakes, while managed for trout, have carp, bass and sunfish as well. Consequently, fingerling growth and survival have suffered. South Teal Lake receives little fishing pressure, likely due to abundant aquatic weed growth and limited access to most of the shoreline. Most of North Teal's shoreline is accessible and anglers commonly catch very nice 13–15-inch rainbow trout all around the lake. Catch rates, on average, are lower here than on other more productive waters such as Blue and Park Lake; however, anglers can find them often have the lake to themselves, especially during the week.

HUTCHINSON AND SHINER LAKES: Located on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge in Adams County, are connected lakes with quality Largemouth Bass, Bluegill and Crappie. They are both best fished from a small boat, canoe, or float tube/pontoon boat. Anglers willing to put in a bit of extra work



can row or paddle to the east end of Shiner Lake to target more naïve bass.

KATEY & JANET LAKES: These two trout lakes can provide solitude and good catches of Rainbow Trout. Katey Lake was treated with rotenone in fall 2019 to remove Carp. In early April, WDFW hatchery staff stocked 200 11–13-inch Rainbow Trout into this six-acre lake. Janet Lake is a short hike west from Katey and can provide anglers with some larger Rainbow Trout. Most of the shoreline is accessible to anglers on both lakes.

EAST AND WEST SAGE LAKES: Similar to Katey, these two lakes were treated with rotenone in fall 2019 in order to remove Carp. The Sage Lakes produce large Rainbow Trout, although for the remainder of 2020 anglers will have to rely on slightly smaller hatchery fish that were stocked in early April. WDFW hatchery staff stocked each lake with 500 11–13-inch Rainbow Trout which should reach 14–15 inches by spring 2021.

WINDMILL, NORTH WINDMILL, NORTH-NORTH WINDMILL, JUNE, VIRGIN, LOIS: Anglers need several days to explore these lakes located south of Warden Lake. This chain of lakes, managed for Rainbow Trout fishing and popular with fly anglers, can produce some large fish.

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KOKANEE FISHING

Color Choice

CONFIDENCE



BY GARY GORDON

It is the single most important thing to grasp: kokanee are kokanee and have the same whims, growth, hormone, and feeding issues wherever they are found. So these kokanee issues are the same in Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, California, North Carolina, New Mexico, and British Columbia.

It turns out that before getting to the point of deciding what colors are the answers to today's fishing mysteries, selecting color is the last component of a successful outing. Since color makes no sound and has no scent, its single role is to stimulate a biting response.

The next thing to grasp is a consistent presentation strategy. What you are trying to do is make your presentation as 100% efficient as possible. This means that all of your equipment from your boat, trolling motors, fishfinder, GPS, rods, reels, downriggers, and releases must be working together so that your presentation can be as efficient as possible. Having the "right" colors means nothing if you are not placing your tackle where the fish are.

Correct presentation strategy means also that your attractor and the lure have to work together. You have to troll the dodger at a speed that allows it to attract. That means that each attracting dodger has a minimum speed that allows it to work correctly. What that speed is depends on the size and shape of the attracting dodger.

One of the best ways to check the correct speed is to simply put the dodger into the water on your fishing line right next to the boat, and look at the action. Speed up or slow down the boat until you feel the action is what you are looking for. Recognize that the dodger and lure are working together, so look for movement in the lure behind the dodger. You simply do not want the lure to just sit there in a straight line behind the dodger; you want some movement. Keep the lure in tight behind the dodger for the best movement. I advocate 6 to 8 inches of leader, even if your lure comes with a long leader.

For early season, that movement does not need to be great. As the season progresses, speed up your presentation to get more movement on your lure. Also, as your target depth gets deeper, increase your trolling speed, and increase the size of your dodger.

I carry three different size selections of dodgers for these very reasons.

For all except the Apex type lures, it is critical to have a short leader behind the dodger for the lure. This gives the maximum movement to the lure from the movement of the attracting dodger. I prefer only about 6 inches behind the attracting dodger regardless of the size of the dodger.

Next would be to match the dodger colors with the lure colors. Although color is not an initial attractor, it is vital to stimulate the biting response.

You want what is making the attracting vibration (the dodger) and the following matching lure work together. The following chart shows relative penetration of visible colors in the water column. We all know there is less light at depth. Go deep enough and there is no light. Water absorbs light in sequence of the visible spectrum. Light enters the water as white light. Then very shortly the red drops out, leaving the balance of colors to continue together down the water column.

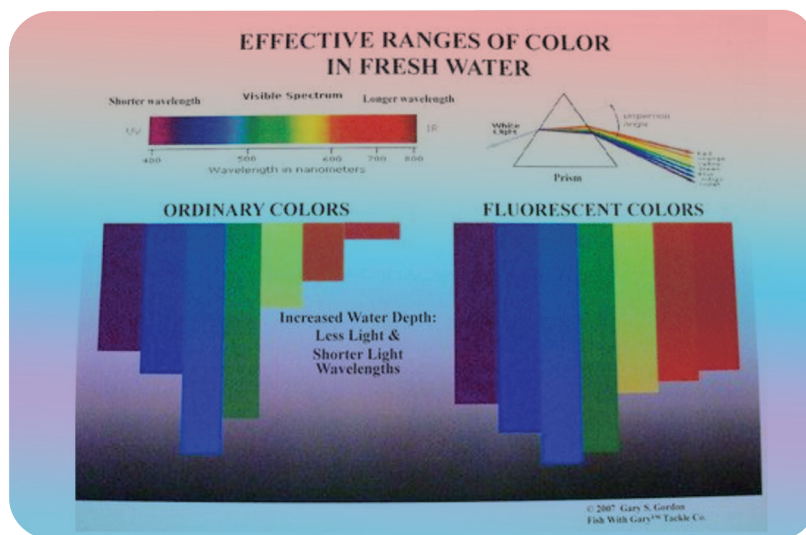
The next to drop out are the oranges, then the yellows, then the green, then the blues and then the indigo and then finally the violet.

But use fluorescent colors and the color you see in your hand will be the same color at depth. So, a fluorescent yellow will still be fluorescent yellow when only violet light can act on it. If it is not fluorescent, it will be black when violet light strikes it. All tackle marketed as “UV” is really fluorescent. There is no “UV” color, and “UV” light does not penetrate the water column more than just a few inches. Most tackle marketed today is fluorescent even if it is not marked “UV.” Fluorescent colors penetrate the water column to far greater depths than do ordinary colors.

So, can kokanee see color? Kokanee are vertebrates and as such they have eyes that contain rods and cones. Cones are the part of the eye for color. Salmonids have a distribution of about 10% cones and 90% rods. So, color vision is basically limited to an area directly in front of the snout and extending out about 20 inches or so in clear water.

This is actually a good thing. Stay with me now. You have this awesome hot pink squid properly trailing your dodger. The fish is going to be attracted to the dodger vibrating, but that will be at some distance to your lure. Once that lure become visible to the fish, it is still only seen by the fish’s eye rods in

shades of gray and black and white tones. But as the fish approaches that 20-inch mark, there’s an explosion of color – just like turning on a light bulb. The fish backs off to 21 inches and it is back to black and white and gray. Come in closer, and bam! Hot color – just the way you planned it topside, but not exactly the way you planned it topside. This color shift works for you as a bite stimulant.



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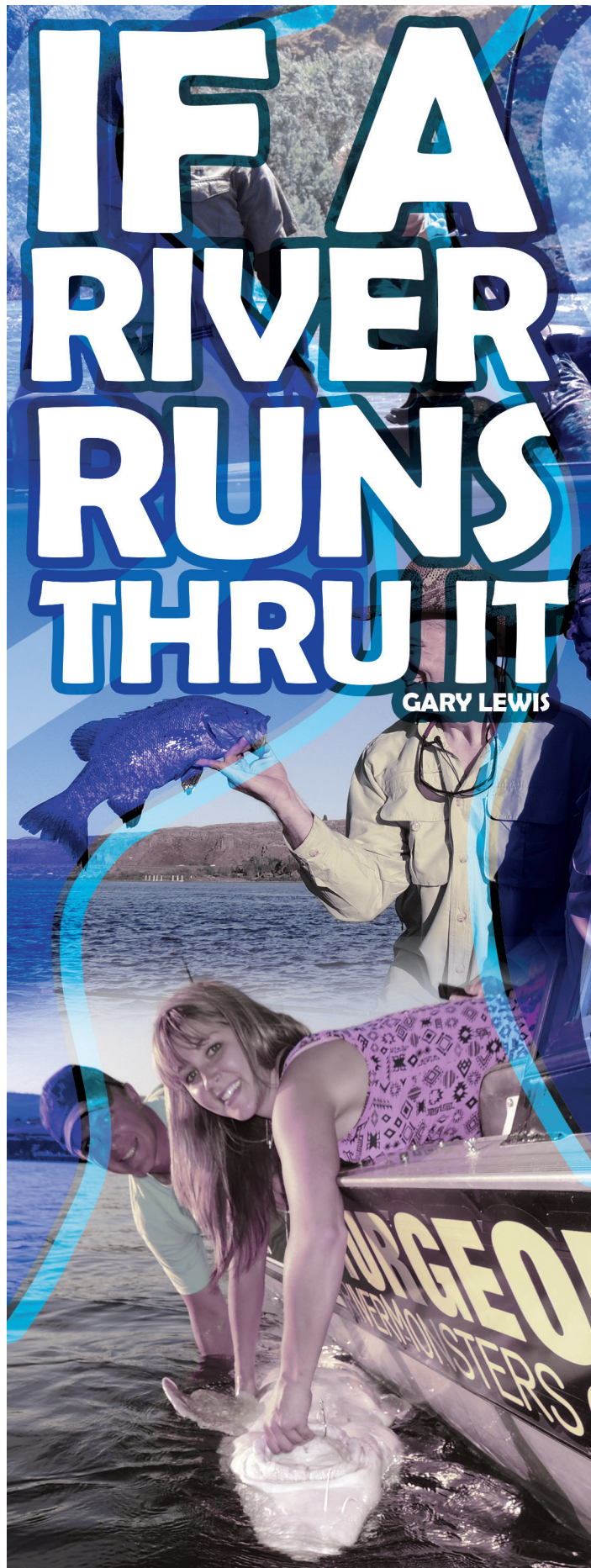
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If the days spent fishing do not count against our allotted time on this earth, as we have been told, then we should fish more often. Because we spend a lot of our time in towns, we should be fishing in towns. It's more efficient.

When the family wanted to go to Disneyworld, I fished. When we went to Hawaii, I dabbled a line in a king's bathing pool. I have fished off hotel balconies and out the windows of cars all over the country.

There are a lot of great fishing towns in Oregon; Shady Cove, Maupin, and Grass Pants, to name a few. If a river runs through it, it's a fishing town.

Portland is, of course, the ultimate fishing town, with the Willamette running right through it and salmon, sturgeon, shad, and smallmouth on tap. One of the best smallmouth of my life came from under the Sellwood Bridge.

What I like is going to a town and catching fish right out from under the noses of the local anglers. Here are some great fishing opportunities coming up in May and June.

SHAD FISHING AT OREGON CITY

One of the best fisheries in May and June is for shad - on the Umpqua, the Columbia, and the Willamette. American shad were introduced to the American west in 1871 when fish were released in major rivers up and down the Pacific coast. Today, millions of shad return to spawn in the spring. Plankton eaters, our American shad is the biggest of the herring species and averages three to five pounds. They bite and fight with abandon.

One great place to catch them is below the falls on the Willamette at Oregon City.

They take small spoons like Dick Nites and Mack's Lure Sonic Baitfish, and red, yellow, or chartreuse jigs. Fly-rodders can get them on small shad flies and darts. They are a blast to catch.

The action starts in May, right about the time the pink dogwood blooms. A fisherman can have 50-plus fish days in June, and contrary to popular opinion, shad are good to eat. Hint: learn how to debone them.

Shad roe is good to eat too. Fast fishing continues through mid-July.

SMALLMOUTH BASS FISHING AT THE DALLES

Smallmouth bass will probably spawn a bit later this year, as the waters are running cold with snow melt, but June is always great for smallies. When the water is running fast, they are likely to be in the eddies along the rip-rapped banks of the Columbia, from Mosier up to Boardman and beyond.

There is a lot of bank access in this section of the river. Some of it requires parking off the highway. Backwater fisheries are an overlooked resource with bass and panfish.

When towing a boat to the Columbia for the first time, keep in mind this is big, tricky water with heavy currents. That said, the river is accessible and the best fishing is along the banks next to the riprap and around jetties in softer water.

If the wind is blowing, there are always backwaters, side channels, and turns in the river where an angler can get out of the wind.

Another option is trout fishing. Taylor Lake, right on the edge of city limits of The Dalles, has been stocked three times already this spring.

TROUT FISHING AT JUNCTION CITY

A few miles north of Eugene on old Highway 99, the angler has to start slowing down at the edge of city limits at Junction City. This town with a population of 6,700 people has its own eponymous body of water, the 8-acre Junction City Pond. Stocked and fishable year-round, this pond gets legal, trophies, brood stock, and sometimes surprise surplus steelhead that will rock your world. By the

time this issue went to press, JC Pond, as the locals know it, had been blessed with a reported 13,450 legal. That's a lot of fish, folks. It's worth a stop along the highway to soak some bait or cast a fly or spinner this spring.

PIKEMINNOW AT PDX

I caught my first pikeminnow across from the Portland airport. We caught a lot of them in those days, toothy critters that averaged 11 inches and ran up to 17 inches or so.

Northern pikeminnow thrive in the tailwaters below the dams and eat tons of baby salmon and steelhead. And for this, they have a bounty on their heads.

For a true city fishing experience, register at the check-in station early in the morning at M. James Gleason Boat Ramp on Marine Drive, then prowl upriver and downriver for northern pikeminnow - nightcrawlers are a good bait - and take your fish to the check-out station at the end of the day. Click on <http://www.pikeminnow.org/> for more information. A fisherman can make \$6 a fish these days.

Think about making this one a last stop on a spring fishing swing through western Oregon. It's not a bad way to cover some fuel expenses and do something for salmon and steelhead at the same time.

The days spent fishing don't count against your life, but the miles on the truck do go against my wallet.

For me, PDX is a 360-mile round trip. According to my calculations, I'll need to catch 11 pikeminnow to break even on the fuel. Once I catch fish number 12, I'm making a profit!

GARY LEWIS BIO

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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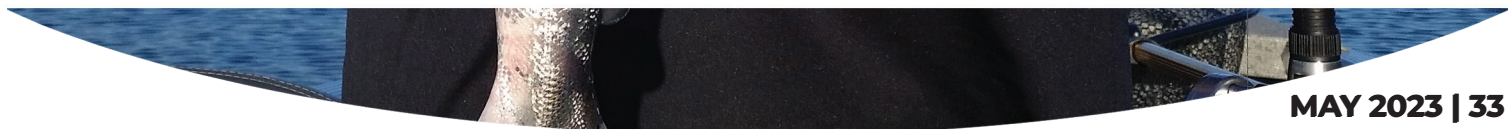


Kokanee fishing this spring? Then get the lead out; lead core line, that is.

Where winter kokanee seems to be a very depth-oriented fishery, we are on the cusp of our popular spring/summer kokanee fishery. Downriggers rule for kokanee fishing, but on our boat we almost always put out 2 lead core line rigs before the downriggers are deployed. Using a properly set up lead core line rig gives the angler fairly accurate depth control without having to use downriggers. Using the appropriate top shot and the following method for setting up your lead core line rigs, the angler can fish anywhere between the surface to about 30 or 40' deep with some level of accuracy. To that note; while filming a Northwest Fishing segment, I

snagged the bottom with a lead core line set up in 70' of water while we were trolling in a straight line. Interesting, but how could that have happened?

We were trolling Lake Southerland on the Olympic Peninsula. We were metering a large body of kokanee at around 30-40' in 70 feet of water. I ran out 2 ½ colors, or 60-70' lead core line, plus my 60-70' top shot while trolling at 1.0 mph. Not sure exactly what happened, but my guess is there was also an underwater current that was running with the boat. With minimal drag and water resistance on the line, it just sank to the bottom and I had to say goodbye to one of my favorite kokanee dodgers and custom kokanee flies.





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It was an unusual situation and you wouldn't want to make a habit of trolling at 70 feet deep, but lead core line can run that deep.

What exactly is lead core line? It is a type of fishing line where there is an inner core of soft lead wire sheathed by an outer layer of braided fiber. Lead core line has been around since the 1940's and is commonly used by Midwest walleye or Great Lakes salmon and steelhead trollers. The salmon guys use a technical approach using planer boards and multiple lines to target salmon on the great lakes.

Lead line isn't as common here in the Pacific Northwest

but it should be. Fortunately, our lead core line fishery doesn't have to be technical, we can just clip on a dodger or lure and let out the appropriate number of colors. Lead core line is available at most of our local Northwest tackle shops. Lead core line comes in a variety of "pound test", 12#, 15#, 18# and others. The line is your weight and eliminates the need for downriggers, planers, or separate weights. Lead core line comes dyed in contrasting colors. The color changes every 10 yards or about 30'.

The following is solely my opinion and not supported by industry testing or maybe even your own experience.



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When fishing for kokanee, use the lightest test lead core line available. With the slower speeds used when we hunt kokanee, the test of the lead core line will not affect the sink rate; 15# lead core line will not sink faster than 12# lead line, in fact the 12# lead core line may sink further while trolling. The thinner diameter would result in reduced drag, and may allow gear to sink faster. Finally, 12# lead core line breaking strength is more than adequate for kokanee fishing.

I think there is belief that lead core line setups are heavy and not really suited for the light tackle acrobatics common when kokanee fishing. For our lead core line rigs, we use standard 7 ½-8' fiberglass kokanee rods and 150-300 (size ratings vary greatly by manufacture) series round baitcasting reels. You really don't need line counter reels because you will be counting colors; "hot bite at 1 ½ colors along the eastern shore..." My approach for spooling the reels is a bit different and is a phased setup that goes something like this:

On an empty reel with the same capacity as the reel you plan to fish the lead core line on, tape the end of the lead core line on the spool and load 3 colors of lead core line + 3-4'. Cut the lead core line, saving the balance of the filler spool.

Remove the actual lead core from 3-4' of the loose end of the lead core line on the reel. Using a blood knot, Albright knot, a double uni knot, or

other similar knot, tie 20# braid of your choice to the end of the stripped lead line. Then fill the spool with the 20# braid.

Here's the tough part; you will need 2 empty spools or a second reel of the same type and size. The goal is to load the braid/lead line combo on your working reel braid first. When using the same reel or a reel with the same capacity as the reel temporarily holding the lead core line/braid combo, it is easy to just transfer reel to reel. Otherwise, you have to transfer to a spool, then to another empty spool, and then back on to the original reel.

The reel is now loaded with 3 colors of lead core line on top. Strip the lead core out of 3 or 4 feet of the loose end of the lead core line. Using your favorite braid to mono (or in this case, favorite stripped lead line to mono) knot, tie on a 60' 8-12# fluorocarbon top shot.

That's basically it. We use the lead core line setup almost exclusively for kokanee, so I just attach a small Duolock snap to the end of the fluorocarbon top shot to make changing dodgers easier. My reasoning for running only 3 colors of lead core line is that at 0.8-1.4 mph, 3 colors is all you need to fish to about 30-40' deep. In fact; as previously mentioned, using this approach I have snagged the bottom in 70' of water with just 2 ½ colors of core lead line out. Running just 3 colors of lead core line with braid backing allows you to load a fair amount of backing

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on standard bait casting reels with the bonus of reducing the extra weight of additional colors of lead line.

Not always, but when fishing for kokanee, the lead core line rigs typically out fish any of the other rods on our boat. Believe it or not (you have to know me...), I have a theory about why the lead core line rigs are so fishy on our boat. I use a 60-70' top shot, so even with just 1 color of lead core line out, the dodger/lure combo is running almost 100' behind the boat. Any boat-shy fish would have regrouped and forgotten about the big, noisy aluminum shadow that just passed overhead. Additionally, I know that I'm weird and overthink these things, but I think that the sonic vibration of the sheathed lead line moving through the water has some positive effect on a fishery. Something akin to a dog whistle: we can't hear it, but they come running.

Whether or not the kokanee come running or swimming, lead core line is a deadly effective tool in our kokanee arsenal. It works equally well with the smaller dodgers, flashers, and gang trolls used for kokanee fishing. With the telltale thump, thump, thump at the rod tip, having at least one lead line rig in the water is a great indicator that your trolling speed is correct.

Lead core line rigs are also an exceptional choice when

pulling small stick baits or minnow type lures baits for cutthroat and rainbows. Just run ½ a color and get the frypan ready! Lead core line and stick baits go together like peas and carrots. The takedown when trolling stick baits on lead core line is surprisingly aggressive. The fish's battle for freedom seems to magnify as it telegraphs up your lead line to your rod tip.

Once you set up a lead line rig or two, you'll likely find that the lead core line rigs will be your go to kokanee rods. Lead core line is effective and straightforward to use when paired with the smaller dodgers, flashers, and gang trolls we use for kokanee fishing. Lead core line is equally effective with small spoons and stick baits for various trout species. The initial investment may seem extravagant, but it's still cheaper than a pair of downriggers. If you're fishing from a kayak, canoe, inflatable, or even a drift boat without downriggers, your lead line rigs will be indispensable in your quest to do battle with a PNW silver football.



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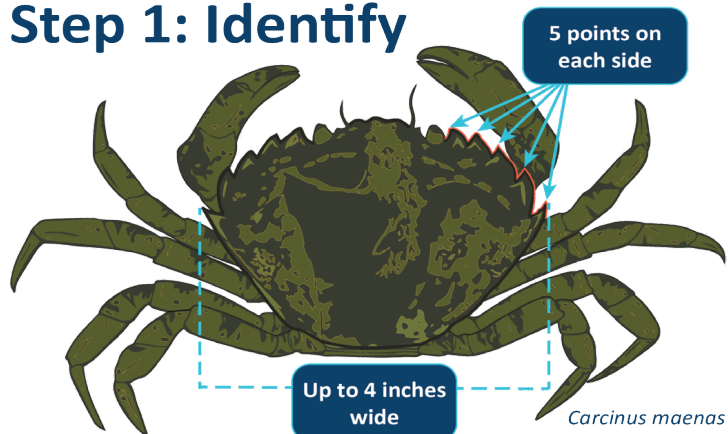


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