

# NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

FREE

24 COVER STORY

## THE BIG ONE VS. THE MANY

PAGE 24



LAKE WASHINGTON KOKANEE  
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BACKCOUNTRY TROUT  
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## EDITOR'S CORNER:

*"Getting back to basics". Remember when you were young, and you went to bed with great anticipation of the coming morning's fishing trip? Getting up early, waking your sibling, and loading the baskets of your bike. Bait, rod and reel, tackle box, lunch. Off on the road you go, the chill of the morning shocks you awake as you ride ever closer to your favorite fishing hole, anticipation building. And then you arrive. Grabbing your spot, you thread the worm on the hook and make that first cast of the day. Placing your rod down and tightening the line, you wait with rapt attention for that first "tap tap" signaling a fish on the other end of your line. The rod jerks forward and you pull back, as setting the hook you feel a strong pull and reel in with excitement. It's a 12-inch bullhead, a nice start to the day. You're twelve and everything is right – dare I say – perfect with the world.*

*I wish for you to always hold on to that childhood memory, especially as the responsibilities of adulthood weigh on you. Happy fishing everyone!*

Mike Carey - [mikec@nwfishing.net](mailto:mikec@nwfishing.net) @Michael Carey Northwest Fishing



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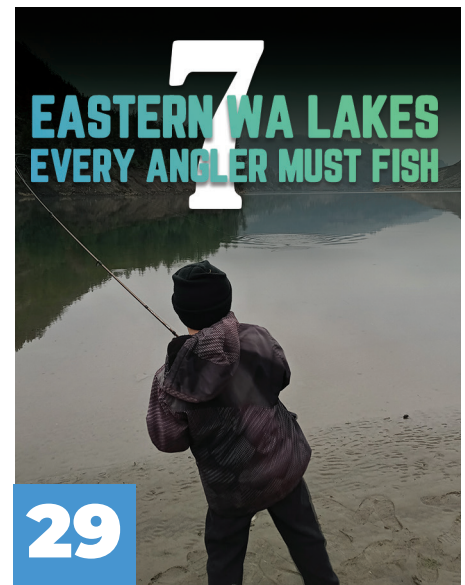
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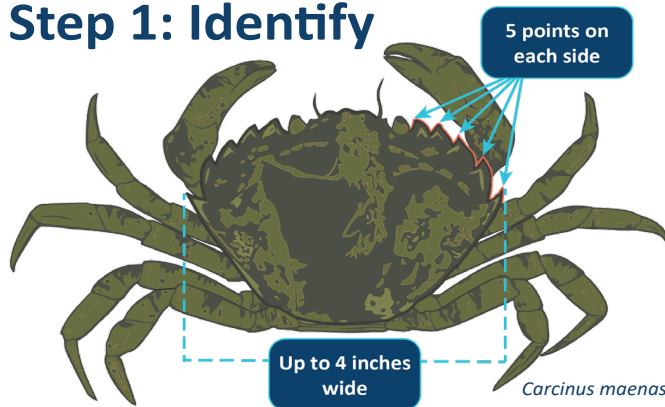
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Must Fish  
*Eric Magnuson*



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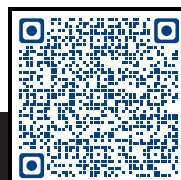
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*\*All of the articles do not necessarily represent the opinion of Northwest Reel Life magazine.*



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HISTORY

Shelby's career as a guide began in 1996, at the age of 19, guiding for Meseberg Adventures Duck Taxi on the Potholes reservoir. Soon he began guiding fishing trips, and offered airboat adventures for several years as well.

Ross Outdoor Adventures began in 2003 by owner Shelby Ross after a lifetime of hunting and fishing Central Washington, and growing up near the south shore of Potholes Reservoir. At the age of 14 he was running his parents boats all over the lake chasing walleye, bass, and whatever else he could trick into biting.

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# Lake Washington KOKANEE SECRETS

BY HANNAH PENNEBAKER

For most people, a trip to Lake Washington means a day of kayaking, jet skiing, or picnicking. But did you know that the lake plays host to thousands of kokanee? These land-locked sockeye salmon are smaller than their ocean-going cousins, but they taste great and are available year-round. Early summer is the perfect time to target them.

They are aggressive and plentiful. Learning how to troll for kokanee is a great way to dip your toe in the water before you fish for salmon in the fall. Whether you're an avid kokanee fisherman or a beginner, you should add Lake Washington to your list of summer fishing

destinations. Not sure how to start? Let's go over some key information to make your trip to Lake Washington a success: which launches to use, tried and true techniques, and productive locations to start with.

## LAUNCHES

There are many boat launches surrounding Lake Washington, so I'll just name the most popular ones here. In the south, the Atlantic City boat ramp is pretty spacious and has restrooms available. There is a fee to launch your boat, but the parking is free and plentiful. Gene Coulon Park is another popular option at the southern end of the lake. Parking can be tight, especially during weekends.

There is a launch fee but there are restrooms and an Ivar's close by if you get hungry!

Near the middle of the lake, the Kirkland Marina has a small boat ramp. The launch fee is steep, but you can buy an annual pass to save some money. On the other side of the lake, Magnuson Park offers a well-maintained and easy to use boat ramp. At the very northern tip of the lake is the Kenmore boat ramp. It gets pretty shallow here, so be careful when launching in the early morning. There is no dock, but there's a nice bathroom and there's no launch fee. Although Lake Washington is quite large, you're never very far from a boat ramp!



## TECHNIQUES

Although Lake Washington has a wealth of shore access, kokanee tend to hang out in water out of casting distance. Your best bet is to troll for them.

Typical kokanee gear works well. Toss out a variety of lures and let the fish tell you what they want. Some days they like spinners, other days they want plugs. Kokanee can be very picky.

Artificial maggots and corn should both be in your tackle bag, as well as a few bottles of scent. While pink is the classic kokanee color for a reason, orange, red, and watermelon are all great choices for lure colors too. Sometimes giving the fish something they haven't seen before is the key to success. Trolling flies works great! Make sure you have a variety of dodgers too. You can experiment with different dodger styles and colors. I also tend to use a shorter leader than usual on Lake Washington. The fish seem to respond well to a 9-inch leader.

Make sure to bring a long-handled net for landing the fish. Kokanee have soft mouths- boat flipping them often results in lost fish. It's also a good idea to bring a stringer or a bucket to bleed the fish in.

A cooler full of ice to keep your fish cool once bled is also crucial. Kokanee also has soft meat, to get the best meat quality it's a good idea to bleed and ice them.

## LOCATIONS

One of the most important things to bring along on your Lake Washington trip is a fish finder. Especially during late summer when the kokanee dive down deep to escape the warm surface water, you'll need your fish finder to show you what depth to fish. I also recommend placing marks when you get hits or reel in a fish. Set your fish finder to show your trail, and you can set up a good trolling pattern. On the southern end of the lake, try fishing on either side of the I-90 bridge. On the north end, try fishing south of Highway 520. Target points and coves. The fish will move depending on the time of day and weather. Don't be afraid to try somewhere new!

Before we wrap up, let's talk about a few last-minute tips for your Lake Washington trip. First, I highly recommend planning on starting and ending your fishing trip early in the morning. This lake is incredibly popular

with jet skiers, inner tubers, and water skiers, particularly later in the day. If you get off the water early, you'll minimize your chances of tangling your lines or getting a rocky ride. It's a good idea to wear a life jacket and make sure your kids and/or dogs have them as well. The limit is 5 fish, and you must release any fish over 18 inches in length. This rule is in place to protect sockeye that run in the lake during late summer.

Lake Washington kokanee are the perfect fish to go after on a warm summer day. They're absolutely delicious on the smoker or even fried. Kids will love reeling in fish after fish! So, head out to Lake Washington and get your limit!







All winter long we kept hearing about the Pacific Northwest's lack of snowpack and how it would affect our summer. A call for a drought, possible bad wildland fire season, lack of drinking water, and all the “doom and gloom” news agencies use to sell us fear. Sure, the snowpack is low but spring rains came and filled our reservoirs so the threat of a significant wildfire season is still lingering but what I kept hearing all winter and spring was how the backcountry would be snow-free very soon. My normal backcountry fishing trips usually start around the 4th of July and continue well into late fall. However, this year the trails will likely be open and navigable, streams will be receding, and lakes will be ice-free

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come mid-June and that means it is time to strap on the boots, load the tent into the backpack, and grab the lightweight fishing gear.

Before you load up the pack and throw it in the small tackle container it is best to check mountain conditions. Even in June, you should always be ready for some chilly weather and high stream crossings. The SNOTEL Washington website provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture will give you up-to-date data on current snowpack. Then do a quick search for river levels at the USGS website to let you know how much of that snow is melting. Once you figure out if the lake you are trying to get to is not only ice-free and if any streams you might have to cross to get there are safe to wade then one last web check for

trail conditions at websites like the Washington Trails Association can provide you with important information such as any hazards on the trail, or if downed trees and other useful tidbits have blocked the trailhead. The main reason you want to research before you go is that June can be an interesting month for those trying to get to the backcountry. South-facing slopes will be open and snow-free but any north-facing slopes might still have lingering snow and making it impossible to get to the lake.

As the month wanes on most of the high country will be opened up and access will not be as much of an issue. Bugs will be hatching and though that makes for great fishing it also means a bit of an annoyance.



Last year my son and I hiked into a relatively low “high mountain lake” that was at about 3,000 feet elevation. Fish were jumping and we soon found out why. Mosquitos flocked to our skin and swarmed us to the point that Deet was not going to be enough. Luckily, I had brought along Thermacells for both of us and plenty of extra butane cartridges and chemical pads that keep the bugs away. I also had a quick lesson on Thermacell's and that if you choose to strap them onto your pack to be sure that the vents do not become

blocked as it can overheat and even melt the nylon on your pack.

Long-sleeved shirts, lightweight hiking pants, and head nets will help with keeping bugs away and make for a more comfortable day of hiking and fishing. A lightweight double wall tent is also an excellent choice so you can make a quick bug-free area to sit and eat lunch or just rest and get away from the bugs for a bit. Being double-walled means the inner wall is a mesh material and you can leave the rainfly off if the weather is nice or put it on if the


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clouds come up. Weather is another factor for June's high-country adventures. Cool mornings and warm afternoons often mean thermal winds. Welcome the breeze as it will help keep the mosquitos at bay but also be ready if an afternoon thunderstorm approaches. Rain and even a snow shower is common in June in higher elevations as it is still springtime up in the mountains. Keep in mind that if you hike into a wilderness area fires are often not allowed so drying out can be a challenge.

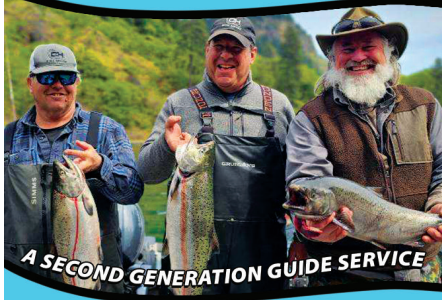
When it comes to finding the right lake be sure to check out the fish and wildlife website and other resources. For those of us in Washington the WDFW has a tab for "high lakes" and there you can find a list of lakes which include their location by GPS as well as their elevation and size. It also will have directions to the trailhead or lake itself and even a stocking schedule on when it was last stocked. These lakes are often supplemented with fish that are hiked in by volunteer groups and periodically restock the lake. Some lakes have natural production if

there is a cold creek that trout can spawn in or if they have brook trout, which is a member of the char family and can spawn in the lake itself.

Backcountry fishing is often done in solitude. Once you find a few of these high mountain lakes you will soon realize which ones are popular with other hikers and anglers and which ones are "secret". If you find a lake that is full of trout, and nobody around, then do yourself a favor and keep it a secret. These lakes cannot take much pressure and if you post your trip on social media and include the lake, trail, or even a nearby mountain then soon the lake will get new visitors and the next time you go there it might be void of fish. Then again, there are several lakes that are already popular, and those lakes tend to get regular re-stocking of fish so if you find other anglers do not feel bad about it. Same with harvesting a fish or two for dinner, these lakes either had or have a natural way to repopulate them with trout or were sterile to begin with and the fish were introduced into the lake for the specific reason to be caught. This does not mean you should

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catch a limit of trout to take home as there are plenty of lowland lakes to do that with. Instead, catch and release using artificial flies and lures is a wonderful way to spend the day. When it's time for lunch, you can eat what you caught.

When it comes to cooking your catch, again, know the rules if you can have a campfire or not. A small titanium frying pan and a butane stove is a great way to cook up some fish. If fires are allowed, then packing a small piece of tinfoil is lightweight and



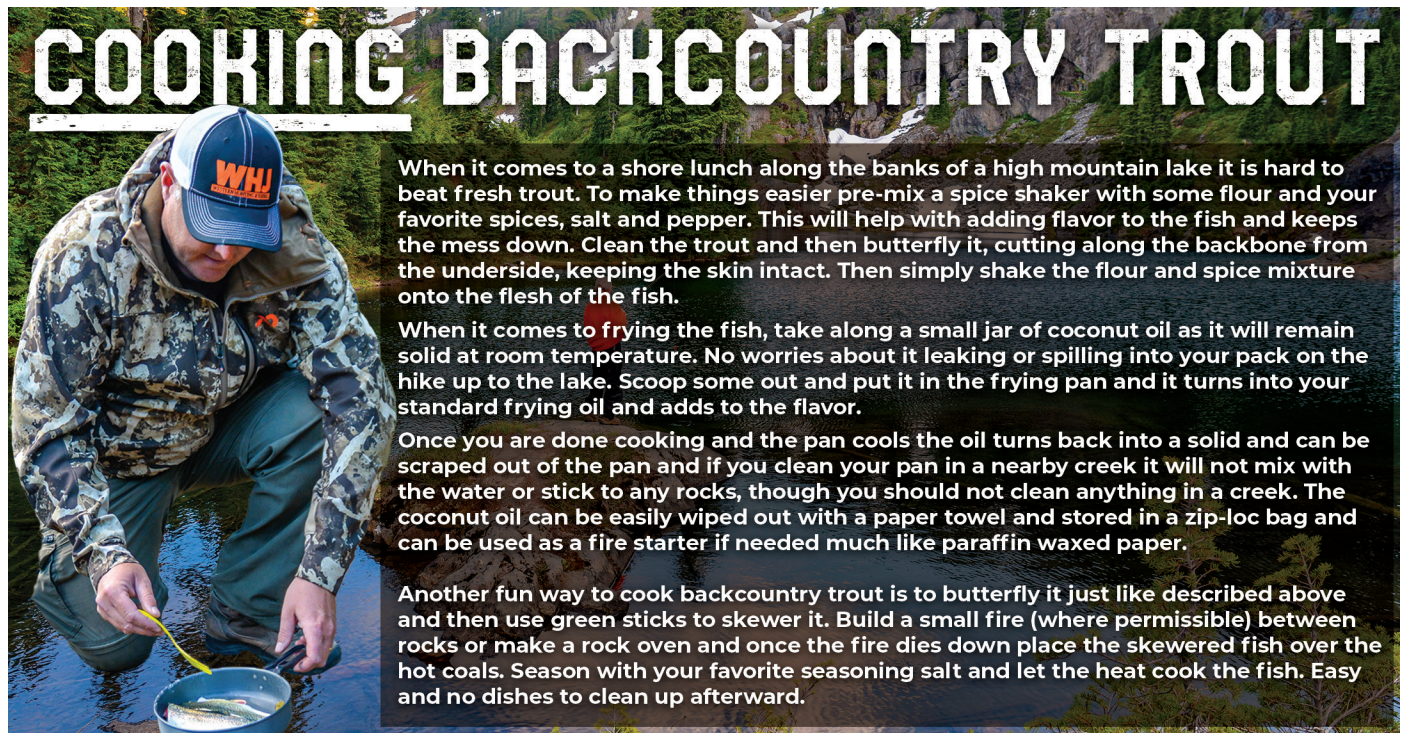
makes cooking the fish easy or you can make a skewer and cook it open over the rising heat of the flames. High mountain trout make a great lunch, probably because of the work it takes to get to these lakes as well as the views as you sit along the shoreline.

One of my favorite ways to fish high mountain lakes is with a lightweight fiberglass spinning rod. This rod is nearly indestructible and can take a beating while strapped to my pack. The spinning outfit allows the angler to cast lightweight lures such as Roostertail's and other spinners, but you can also use a plastic bubble style bobber and a dry fly. Fly

fishing is a lot of fun and a lot of the lakes will have gradual shorelines as they are remnants of large ice fields. Other lakes might have a scree field where you can climb out on the rocks but be aware of your back cast and that rocks can shift. In the early part of the month it might still be a bit chilly to wade, but by month's end a day out swimming and wading in the cool water also means being able to cast further. Regardless if you use a fly rod or the spinning rod with a bubble bobber very few things can beat a rising trout taking a dry fly. Most of these fish will be small and malnourished due to long winters and not much

bug activity in the chilly water. This means using small dry flies such as a size 12 elk hair caddis or a size 14 mosquito. Light leaders in 4 to 6-pound monofilament will suffice and keeping the mainline light, around 6 to 8-pound test will help with casting long distances.

June offers the first chance at getting up to the backcountry. Lakes will become active with hungry trout and snow will melt from the trails. Load up the pack, be ready for changing conditions and strap on the trout rod. It is finally time to head to the high mountain lakes for some great fishing with incredible views.



# COOKING BACKCOUNTRY TROUT

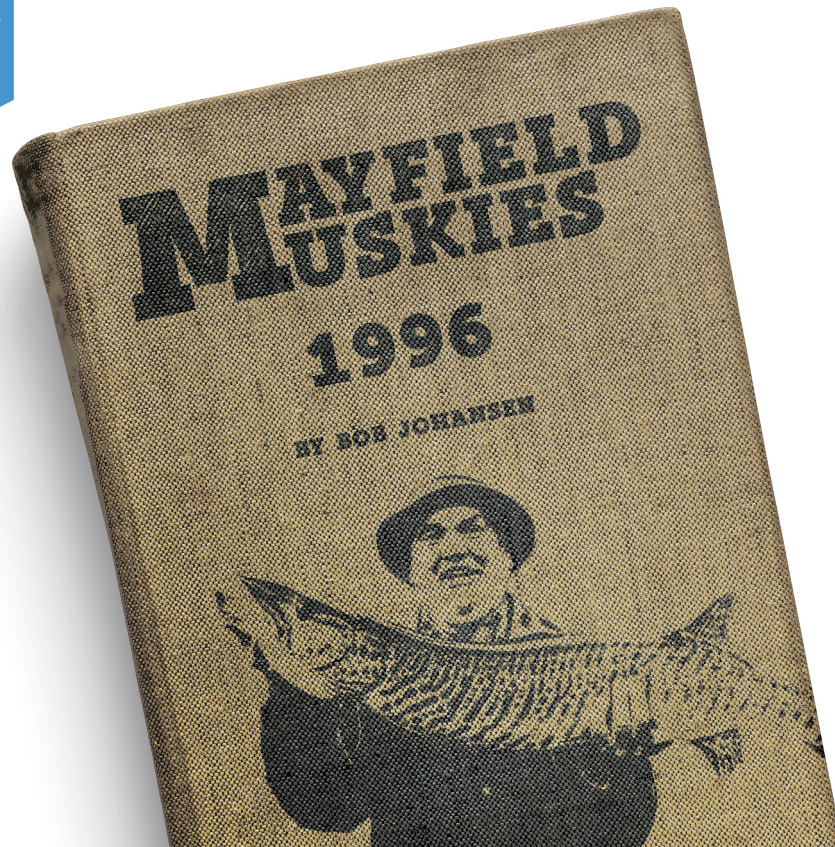
When it comes to a shore lunch along the banks of a high mountain lake it is hard to beat fresh trout. To make things easier pre-mix a spice shaker with some flour and your favorite spices, salt and pepper. This will help with adding flavor to the fish and keeps the mess down. Clean the trout and then butterfly it, cutting along the backbone from the underside, keeping the skin intact. Then simply shake the flour and spice mixture onto the flesh of the fish.

When it comes to frying the fish, take along a small jar of coconut oil as it will remain solid at room temperature. No worries about it leaking or spilling into your pack on the hike up to the lake. Scoop some out and put it in the frying pan and it turns into your standard frying oil and adds to the flavor.

Once you are done cooking and the pan cools the oil turns back into a solid and can be scraped out of the pan and if you clean your pan in a nearby creek it will not mix with the water or stick to any rocks, though you should not clean anything in a creek. The coconut oil can be easily wiped out with a paper towel and stored in a zip-loc bag and can be used as a fire starter if needed much like paraffin waxed paper.

Another fun way to cook backcountry trout is to butterfly it just like described above and then use green sticks to skewer it. Build a small fire (where permissible) between rocks or make a rock oven and once the fire dies down place the skewered fish over the hot coals. Season with your favorite seasoning salt and let the heat cook the fish. Easy and no dishes to clean up afterward.





It was August 2, 1996. Son Don and I were on the second day of a four-day fishing trip. We had spent the night camping at Riffe Lake's Taidnapam Park and were now heading to Mayfield Lake to try for one of the elusive tiger muskies. For the past few years, tiger muskies have been the big attraction at Mayfield. A sterile cross between a true muskellunge and a northern pike, they had been planted into Mayfield Lake to help control the large numbers of squawfish and other rough fish.

They have a reputation of being very difficult to catch and have been called "the fish of 10,000 casts." It had rained hard most of the night and was still raining very hard as we reached the Ike Kinswa State Park launch ramp at Mayfield Lake. We had planned to camp the night at the state park but had noted that the "campground full" sign was posted. The only raingear we had was jackets so we stripped down to swimsuits and rain jackets. Neither of us had fished for tiger muskies before and had no idea how or where to start so we started at the bridge

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near the launch ramp. Don hooked the first fish, a squawfish, -- the first of at least 50 we were to catch during the day. We saw a couple of huge splashes near the bridge supports that we assumed must be muskies. We also saw some large, dark shapes in the water that definitely looked like big muskies.

We saw a big fish splash under the bridge. Don motored over and made a long cast with his huge Rapala 18 S. There was a big swirl as the fish struck -- Don's 15-pound test Maxima stretched and snapped.

The muskie's teeth had cut the line as clean as a razor blade. I then cast a large spinner bait to the area and had an instant hook-up.

"Got him," I said excitedly but the big fish leaped and spit out the hook. We didn't think it was the muskie but never knew for sure just what species of fish it was. We continued fishing for a couple of hours. Don was throwing a large silver Rapala Shad Rap and I was casting a large brown crawfish Hawg Boss Super Toad.

We were catching squawfish almost

constantly. We caught so many that when one was hooked, the other angler barely looked and just kept on casting. "Casting on automatic," as Don put it.

Finally, Don really got my attention when he yelled, "*Muskie, I've got one.*" The huge fish was beautiful and put up a pretty good fight. Fortunately, this fish was hooked in the lips and was unable to cut the line with his sharp teeth. As he began to tire, we were wondering how we could land it. We had no net. After a few unsuccessful attempts trying to land him

by the gill plates, I grabbed his lower lip with a pair of pliers and hoisted him into the boat. The hooks were removed and he was placed into the live well for a much-needed rest.

When the fish was first put into the live well, it was so tired it could not remain in an upright position. I held it upright for a couple of minutes while its gill plates pumped fresh oxygen into its body. The fish then seemed to quickly recover its strength while we readied the cameras and the tape measure.



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When we were ready, Don removed his seemingly fully recovered muskie from the live well and we measured it at 36 inches even. Then a few quick photos were snapped and the big beauty was thanked for the memories and gently released. Satiated, by the experience, Don and I just sat down and relaxed in the boat. We celebrated with a cold beer and recapped the catch as the boat slowly drifted in the breeze.

Don offered me the front seat of his boat and first opportunity at prime casting areas. I declined,

preferring to relax in the back seat while Don ran the electric motor and controlled the boat. We started fishing again, starting where Don had hooked his muskie. After only about a dozen casts later, Don cast to the end of a large log near the shoreline and started his retrieve. I watched his cast and then cast my crankbait to the middle section of the same log. The fishing gods surely smiled at me as the twin to Don's beautiful muskie smashed my lure.

*"Dad, you've got a muskie,"*  
Don yelled only seconds

after I had seen the fish hit and had set the hooks.

Fortunately, this muskie also had the crankbait in its mouth and was unable to bite the line. (Wire leaders are a very good idea for these fish.) It too, was beautiful in the clear lake water but fought little with its mouth almost pinned shut by the treble hooks. The big fish was landed and put into the live well for a rest. Again the tape measure stretched to 36 inches. We snapped a few more photos and the big beauty was released to continue his job of eating

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the numerous squawfish. Shortly after catching the last muskie, the skies really opened up and the rain just poured down. Seeking some shelter, Don drove the boat under the bridge. As we sat under the bridge, I commented, *"I don't think I've ever seen it rain harder than this."* And, -- about then, it started raining about twice as hard. Then the wind came up suddenly and started blowing like an angry typhoon.

After a few minutes, the rain and the wind let up and we motored out from under the bridge.

We saw a sailboat upside down in the middle of the lake. One person was trying to swim to the shoreline and the other one was clinging to the keel of the capsized boat.

First, we rescued the nearly exhausted swimmer and then motored over to the boat. The man clinging to the keel of the boat just happened to be the state park ranger. We hooked our rope onto his boat, partially uprighted it, and towed it back to the Rangers dock. The ranger was very grateful for the assistance.

*"We could use a campsite tonight,"* I commented.

*"I think we can work something out,"* the ranger said.

That evening, we drove into the campground and asked if a campsite was reserved for Johansen. "Yes sir," the park employee said as he directed us to a free campsite. That evening we had a nice campfire, had some hot chili, and enjoyed a couple of drinks while we recapped a very eventful day.

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# Old School CATFISHING

*By Mike Carey*

While some memories come and go, others stay with you for a lifetime.

One of my earliest fishing memories is of fishing on the Yahara River in the heart of Madison, Wisconsin. The river in this location was a channel that went from the Lake Mendota Locks, through the heart of the city, and a mile later emptied into Lake Monona. It was urban fishing at its finest, and as 12-year-olds we would look forward to fishing it often.

The day would start the night before, with a flashlight in hand my brothers and I would go into the backyard after dark and hunt for nightcrawlers. They always came out at night, and if one was stealthy, it would be possible to reach down and,

pulling from the hole, ease out a plump crawler that was sure to be breakfast for one of the many species in the river. But pull too hard, and you ended up with half a crawler, which we would not keep as somewhere in our childhood brains we knew that putting in a broken crawler into the bait box would cause the other crawlers to die. I have no idea where we got that urban myth, but in any case, it caused us to be careful pulling those crawlers up.

The next morning we'd hop on our bikes and ride the three miles through Madison to reach our destination, and with any luck, our favorite spot was empty. This location had a small creek flowing from some ponds in the park into the Yahara River.

The creek flowing into the larger river made for some good holding water.

Our rig of choice was simplicity itself. A hook and a couple of split shots 18 inches up, with a nightcrawler threaded onto the hook, and cast out into the river, along a seam from the inflowing creek. Let the bait hit bottom, tighten up the line, and watch for those first telltale jerks on the rod. Pickup said rod and set the hook. The tried-and-true Zebco 202 reel would squeak and moan at the weight of the fish on the end of the line. Sometimes a bass, walleye, or bluegill, but most often we would reel in a brown bullhead. On rare occasions, the excitement of a snapping or spiny softshell turtle would



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break up the morning's procession of fish. These were always a joy for a twelve-year-old boy to catch.

Fast forward 50+ years, my son Matt and I were heading to his father-in-law's ranch on a spring turkey hunt. Years ago, Bill mentioned that the Musselshell River, which flows through his land, held catfish. After doing a little research I learned that indeed, the river in this area was well known to hold nice cats. The Musselshell flows from the small town of Melstone

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another fifty miles or so and empties into the Missouri River at the point where the river widens to form Fort Peck Reservoir. This stretch of water is known as the "warm water zone". Catfish work their way up the Musselshell for spring spawning and live in the many deep holes the river has as it twists and bends through beautiful prairie and wooded hillside. Bill told me that cats in the 10-15 pound range can be caught, but 4-6 pounders were more common. Stopping their upriver passage is the Davis Diversion Dam, downstream for the town of

Roundup, which we would be fishing below.

After a leisurely drive from Great Falls through ever-changing prairie land and wooded hillsides, I arrived at Bill's ranch. Grabbing a quick dinner, I followed Bill as he drove along a gravel road to a prime spot on his land. Deer darted away from us, and turkey leisurely ate their dinners in the recently plowed fields. I had to resist the worry of someone being in "our spot". The land is private property, so unless one of his neighbors were fishing there it would be devoid of other anglers.



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After living in Washington for thirty years I'm still getting used to the concept of being able to fish with no one around me!

We arrived at an irrigation dam that had a beautiful hole below it and a clean river falling over the top of the spillway. As Bill drove off, I pulled out my seven-foot medium-weight spinning rod/reel combo and, like the days of my youth, tied on a large bass wide-gap hook. Two feet above the hook and tied a barrel swivel, and above that a sliding 3/8 ounce weight. For dinner, I was offering the fish down there a large, juicy nightcrawler.

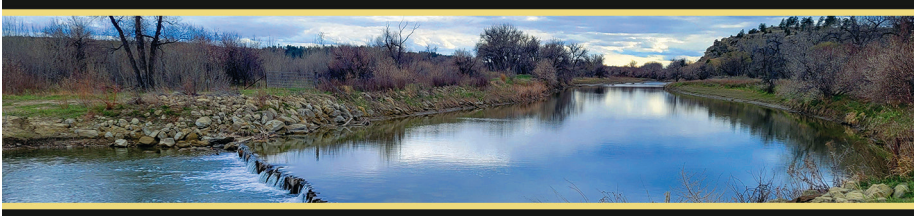
My first cast landed two-thirds of the way across the river. I reeled in the slack line and found a broken branch to prop my rod up against. Within minutes the rod tipped started to twitch, and then took a wild

bend that started to pull the rod towards the river. I grabbed my rod and felt a solid fish on the other end of the line. The fish made several strong runs in the current and then settled down to a battle of tug of war with me. Working him ever closer to the shoreline, I saw that my first Musselshell fish was indeed a beautiful catfish! I found a sandy area of shoreline and dragged the fish onto land. What a beauty!

I re-baited my hook and cast it out to the middle of the river again. After a few minutes of waiting my rod again doubled over from the pull of a large fish. Setting the hook, this time I noted a different fight, and sure, enough, had a beautiful smallmouth bass on my line. Bringing in the fish I admired him, looking to be a solid 4 pounds. I released Mr. Smallmouth back to the river.

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With the sun beginning to set I decided to call it an evening and get back to the ranch before dark.

Arriving at Bill's ranch my son Matt was there, having driven from Helena. "How'd you do"? they asked me. Pulling out the catfish from my cooler, Bill looked at it and said, "That's a nice one, I'd say about ten pounds". Matt's eyes got wide and he asked, "When do we go?"

The next day's sunrise was a classic Big Sky Painting, with red and yellow hues breaking over the trees. We had been shadowing a group of about thirty turkeys, trying to keep below a ridge that separated us from the turkeys between the field and the river. Finding an opportunity for an ambush location, we set up and started calling the mix of hens and gobblers toward us. Donn Morse of Old Goat Lures is also an avid turkey hunter and had given me a couple of the 3D pot calls that he makes and sells. The pots have great tone and soon several turkeys

started our way. And then stopped. Dismayed, we watched the birds turn and head for the river, flying across to safety.

Returning to the ranch Bill had prepared for us a breakfast fit for a, well, a rancher. We made plans for the day, deciding to visit some friends and hitting the river after dinner for an evening bite.

I was excited to be fishing old school with Matt. Our lifetime fishing experiences had generally been from a boat, and I couldn't recall bank fishing with him before. It gave me pause to think how sometimes possessions and technology can rob us of something so simple by making it complex. All the tools we use for fishing from a boat are certainly important, but there is just something about sitting on a bank and soaking a worm, waiting for a bobber to get pulled underwater, or seeing a rod tip twitch, knowing that on the other end, some kind of fishing is preparing to make your bait his meal.

After dinner we headed over to our fishing hole, passing groups of turkeys teasing us in the fields. They would have to wait for another day, we were Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, our fishing rods and a box of worms in hand, looking for the perfect piece of forked tree branch to serve as a rod holder.

Matt baited up and cast out, and in a matter of minutes announced that he had a bite. Tightening down on the line, he set the hook and reeled in his first Musselshell catch, a nice smallmouth bass.

And so, the evening went on. Matt and I were kept busy with a steady evening bite. The smallmouth were most active, and we caught around a dozen ranging from dinks to nice 2-3 pounders. Thrown in the mix were plenty of yellow eye, which is a Montana version of a giant herring, around 12" in length and very spunky to catch. Sadly, the catfish bite was dead. No worries, though, with the Missouri River as our backyard there will be plenty of new places to explore the next time we decide to go "Old School" fishing.

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COVER ARTICLE

# THE BIG ONE VS. THE MANY

BY MATT CAREY

I can't be the only one to think about this when I am getting ready for a fishing trip. Would I rather catch "the big one" or would I rather catch a steady stream of fish and hit my limit? The one monster fish could land me in the record books if I do well enough. That's a fishing story I could get tattooed on me, or at least wear a button that says "Ask me about my state record fish". On the other hand, if we do really well, catching the limit on fish would fill up my freezer. And at (insert large number here) for the limit, I won't even hardly have time to sit down if I'm catching them all day. That doesn't even include the limit on a different kind of species

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I could inadvertently catch even though I'm not targeting them! Whether you're somebody who relishes that big fish or someone who would rather be engaged in a regular catch, let's at least hear out each side.

## FOR "THE BIG ONE"

Marathon fishing days can lead to a lot of time talking with friends or inside our own minds. Those stretches of time where you'll change out gear to find something that works. Is waiting the best part of fishing? No, not really. But it is part of the experience. You go an hour, two...six. Maybe without any kind of bite. And then, **BAM**. Your rod gets absolutely slammed. The fight is like nothing you've come across

before. You think to yourself you must be snagged up or one of some different species because the one you're targeting simply does not fight like this. Then, the fish surfaces. It looks like something that's been hitting the \$5 buffets in Vegas and isn't afraid to go back for thirds or fourths. It gets netted and you think to yourself, "How in the world did I catch this".

You grin, you cheer, you motion for everybody you're fishing with to take a look. It's easily the story of the day, probably the story of your year. The old adage, I've got bigger fish to fry, tells you everything you need to know about moving on to bigger and better things.

In fact, there's an argument about the many that will probably resonate with many of you. It's probably the most obvious argument because it's the argument in favor of The Big One. It hit me as I was looking back in my photo album trying to justify an argument for the many. Who takes photos of a bunch of small fish?

Sure, maybe you'll take the first one to show you did in fact catch something. Or if you remember at the end of the day you'll remember to line up all the fish on the dock. But, that's when you're already trying to bring the boat in, manage the queue of vehicles trying to get in and out, secure the boat to the trailer, put away the gear, and generally not look like a rookie. These kinds of photos are great for a guide service to show they get folks on the water and into fish, which is certainly what you would hope for.

But to the layman, the appeal really doesn't seem to be there. Bystanders could look at your spread of fish and comment on you having had a good day, catching near or at the limit is great, but will silently be judging you and think about the mammoth they



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caught relative to the hum size of the fish you brought in. It's way more common and photo-worthy to post that one huge fish, rather than the compilation of small to average-sized fish. The one that makes people say "Wow!" But those fish that make everyone on the boat stop and admire it? Those are the kind of kodak moments you'll stop everything you're doing to make sure you document the occasion. Look at any guide service, they post pictures of the legendary fish. State records? Do I need to say anymore? Where else can

common folks like us hold a record for 30 or more years, because it sure won't be in home runs for touchdown passes. But one nice fish can put our names in the record books. And it could be at any moment. Really, if we don't fish for the clout and sense of self-worth, why bother fishing at all?

#### FOR "THE MANY"

Who among us doesn't like pulling in their catch? I mean that's the main objective of fishing, isn't it? To bring in something on your line besides seaweed or a bait-less hook?



You're out with some friends, or maybe a kid who hasn't fished much. An entertaining day with a cooler full of fish is the fastest way to hook someone else into this great sport. When you get to the point in the day where everyone on the boat is looking at each other and asking whose turn it is, you know you're in the middle of an awesome fishing adventure. In this fishing reality, we've built for ourselves, everyone gets a chance to participate, and everyone gets to enjoy a tasty dinner (if keeping your catch is

your thing). The banter picks up. The camaraderie builds. Everyone is in great spirits and appreciates the constant action. There isn't that sense of if we catch something but instead, when are we going to catch the next one? You pass by some other boats in the water and exchange the usual conversation. What are you using, how has the bite been, that kind of stuff. Instead of the meh response of just doing OK with a few bites here and there you proudly share that the bite has been insane and you're getting hit on every rod at every



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depth with every lure you're putting in the water. The other boat slowly trudges by with expressionless faces as they've had the exact opposite kind of experience on the day. In fact, they share that they've been camping throughout the weekend and haven't so much as seen a fish surface or a blip on the fish finder. And like clockwork, your casual conversation is broken up because, well, you've got another bite to attend to.

Another area to think about as to why we should be vying for the huge number of fish rather than the huge fish is the likelihood of each happening. We have all caught some big fish, me included. But many more of us, and more often, I would wager have had days where we limited out or went through an insane bite. Those fishing outings where you continuously pull in solid fish. The kind of fish that offers a good fight and makes for a consistent fun experience. For every day where a single big fish gets caught, there seems to be exponentially more multi-fish days out on the water. That consistency can't be overlooked or overshadowed when we start those early mornings.



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There you have it. The pros and cons of catching The Big One vs catching The Many. What do you think? Are you the kind of person who wants to hang his hat on a fish that you'll talk about for the rest of your life? Or are you the kind of person who pulls in a huge quantity of fish and sees

that as a day well spent out on the water? Let's at least end with some common ground. In each of these scenarios, both kinds of anglers spent the day fishing. They can both be happy about that.





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# 7 EASTERN WASHINGTON LAKES EVERY ANGLER MUST FISH

BY ERIC MAGNUSON

When it comes to angling adventures, Eastern Washington boasts an array of lakes that promise unforgettable experiences for fishing enthusiasts. From serene hideaways to expansive waters teeming with aquatic life, each lake offers its own unique charm and beauty. In this article, we will go into the allure of 7 of my must-visit lakes in Eastern Washington: Loon Lake, Diamond Lake, Long Lake, Deer Lake, Waitts Lake, Sacheen Lake, and Lake Roosevelt.

## 1 LOON LAKE A TRANQUIL HAVEN

Nestled amidst the scenic beauty of Stevens County, Loon Lake is a haven for anglers seeking tranquility and plentiful fish. Renowned for its population of Kokanee, Rainbow Trout, and Bass, this picturesque lake also offers World Record Tiger trout. An abundance of opportunities for both

novice and seasoned anglers. Whether you prefer casting from the shore, chasing the sunfish and crappie around docks, or trolling on a boat, Loon Lake promises a rewarding fishing experience against a backdrop of natural beauty.

## 2 DIAMOND LAKE A GEM FOR ANGLERS

True to its name, Diamond Lake sparkles as one of Eastern Washington's hidden gems for fishing enthusiasts. Situated in Pend Oreille County, this pristine lake is celebrated for its clear water, and the diverse fish species. From trophy-sized Brown trout, and Rainbow trout, to feisty smallmouth bass, and some really nice perch, Diamond Lake presents anglers with a tantalizing challenge and the promise of unforgettable memories. From ice fishing to the warm summer months, the scenery year-round is amazing.

## 3 LONG LAKE WHERE ADVENTURE AWAITS

Stretching across Stevens and Spokane counties, Long Lake beckons anglers with its expansive waters and rich aquatic life. Boasting an array of fish species, including a healthy population of Walleye, some Northern Pike, great Perch and Crappie, plenty of Trout, and amazing bass fishing. This lake offers endless opportunities for exploration and angling excitement. Whether you prefer trolling, or casting from a boat, and or from the shore or dock, Long Lake invites you to embark on an adventure filled with anticipation and discovery.

## 4 DEER LAKE A SERENE RETREAT

Tucked away in the foothills of Stevens County, Deer Lake exudes a charm that captivates anglers seeking solace in nature.



With its clear waters and lush surroundings, this idyllic lake serves as a great place for relaxation and fishing. From Rainbow trout, and of course, the Mackinaw lurking below, you can also find some great bass and panfish. There was a time not too many years ago, when an angler could get into a mess of Kokanee, now the mystery is where did they go? Are they still swimming here? Deer Lake offers a bounty of opportunities for anglers to test their skills and unwind amidst the beauty of the great outdoors.

## 5 WAITTS LAKE *WHERE MEMORIES ARE MADE*

Nestled in the heart of Stevens County, Waitts Lake stands as a testament to the enduring allure of Eastern Washington's fishing destinations. Boasting a rich history of big Brown trout, and abundant fish populations, Waitts has great opportunities for also Rainbow Trout, Perch, Bass, and Sunfish. Also a destination for many ice anglers in the winter months as well, as it's open year round. Whether you prefer trolling from

the boat or fishing the resort's docks, Waitts Lake promises an experience filled with camaraderie, excitement, and the promise of cherished memories.

## 6 SACHEEN LAKE *A HIDDEN PARADISE*

Not hidden like a secret, but tucked away in the forest of Pend Oreille County, Sacheen Lake beckons anglers with its year-round secluded beauty and great angling opportunities. This lake holds some gorgeous Brook trout, Rainbow, and Tiger trout.



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A healthy population of yellow perch, and crappie are a favorite target for the ice anglers. I saw some big bass pulled out of this lake as well. With its scenic surroundings, this lake offers something for every angler, whether novice or expert, Sacheen invites you to cast your line and immerse yourself in the peaceful rhythms of nature.

## **7 LAKE ROOSEVELT** *JEWEL OF THE COLUMBIA*

Stretching across the vast landscape of Eastern Washington, Lake Roosevelt is a testament

to the region's natural grandeur and angling legacy. Formed by the mighty Columbia River, this expansive lake offers a wealth of fishing opportunities against a backdrop of rugged beauty and historical significance. With many launches and many miles of shore to enjoy and do some boat camping, you'll find that Lake Roosevelt offers a ton of activities. From trophy size Kokanee, and Trout, and an abundance of Walleye, some anglers may want to target the Sturgeon. Lake Roosevelt promises an angling

adventure like no other. Eastern Washington lakes offer a treasury of angling opportunities for enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. From the small waters of Loon Lake to the expansive waters of Lake Roosevelt, each lake beckons with its own unique promise for adventure. So pack your gear, set your sights on those seven Eastern Washington lakes, and embark on a fishing journey filled with excitement, camaraderie, and the timeless beauty of our great outdoors.

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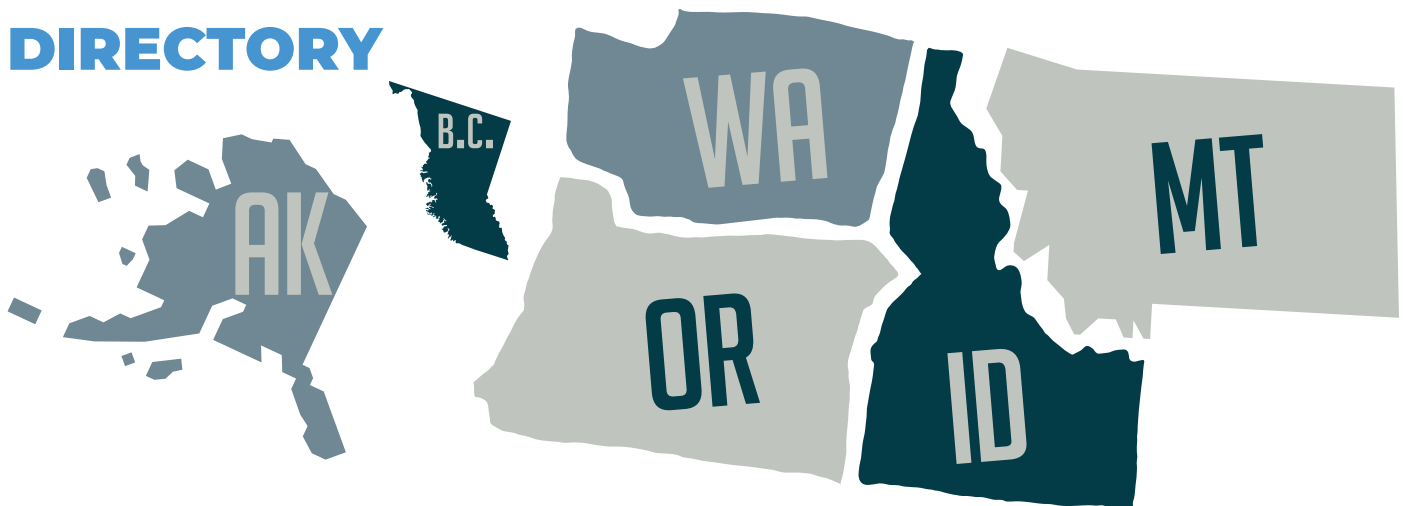
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