

Creel Notes from the



P.O. Box 639, Mercer Island, WA 98040

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President's Riffle

June already! Where did the first six months of the year go? Seems like just yesterday I was huddling with First VP for Membership, Rich Gaspar, and Webmaster Jim Goedhart to try and figure out what we could do conceptually and technically to increase our membership. Actually it turns out quite a lot! With the unanimous support of the Board of Directors and a positive nod from the general membership we have instituted a streamlined process for bringing new members into our fold. These processes have been incorporated into our public website offering with the result that we are actually a bit ahead of schedule in terms of bringing onboard our stretch goal of 20 new members in 2017. I've really enjoyed chatting with these new members and look forward to the day when we can fish together as well.

Speaking of fishing together, Dave Schorsch and the Outings Committee crew have been doing a terrific job scoping out both new and traditional spots for our club outings. I'm sure there will be several first hand reports of the recent Chopaka Lake event in the fishing reports sections of this issue of Creel Notes. Folks I've talked with said that the weather starting on Saturday was wonderful along with great fishing and plenty of camaraderie. The next outing will be Leech Lake later this month. Sounds like another opportunity to meet, greet and bring some lunkers to hand. Still time to sign up but don't delay.

This year, more than ever before, taking a stand for the environment feels not only crucial but something to cling to as the pols in the other Washington try their



best to undo all the environmental progress this country has made in the last 50 years. What can we do? I try and keep the faith by bugging elected officials and signing petitions right and left. While there is some hope that these activities will prove effective, they (at least for me) are not that satisfying. In the past, the club often led work parties to restore riparian habitat along local rivers. The Griffin Creek Project led by Conservation Chairman Doug Schaad was very popular (as was Doug's BBQ brisket lunch) and the personal satisfaction from getting your hands dirty doing something unquestionably good for the environment was off the charts. The club hasn't done much of this in the last few years as the permitting process became very onerous. Happily, we were recently invited by a local chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society to join with them in a river protecting work party in the new Teanaway Community Forest. We only had a couple of days notice before the event and I suspect very few members were actually able to participate. The good news is we now have a connection with the RGS and they have promised to get us involved in protecting the Teanaway in future work parties. Stay tuned!

Hope you all have a great summer season,

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Leech Lake

The Leech Lake outing is June 24, and 25th! Sign up to attend this outing, and to get the free WFFC tattoo! OOPS! I mean, sign up for steak head count!

We will be gathering for happy hour and barbeque about 5:00 at the White Pass Village Inn, right next to the lake. You can camp at the lake, if the sites are available, or stay at the inn. Their condos are set up for multiple people, and end up pretty cheap for a nights stay, fully furnished. 509-672-3131.

We will be providing breakfast there as well, starting around 8:00 Sunday, in the usual spot, room 123, top of the stairs!

The lake has been open (ice and snow free) since late May, and the road

into the boat launch should be clear this week. A couple hardy anglers slid a boat in over the snow last week, to find some nice brookies ready and willing. Intermediate lines and mayfly nymphs and dry lines with emergers should work fine.

Do not forget your appetizers and side dishes for dinner Saturday! See you there! Don't forget to sign up for the Leech Lake outing June 24 and 25! Steak barbeque and pot luck happy hour Saturday evening, pancake breakfast Sunday morning! Fishing in between! Brookies lurking in the weeds, triploid rainbows cruising the flats. Orange bead head damsel nirvana! More info on the web site under OUTINGS! See you there!

Dave Schorsch

Chopaka



Top right, Don Barton, gets the next batch of fried fish from Stephanie & Scott Hagen. The annual breakfast (top) and fish fry bring out old friends, and to the right, Chuck Ballard does what he does best; holds forth.



Creel Notes

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Above, a surprise guest visits the campsite for morning wake-up

On the Fly

Shore Patrol

by David Ehrich

Jen and I hadn't been to Chopaka in enough years to lose one dog to old age and gain another. All week, we packed the van carefully, deciding at the last minute to respect the wind forecast and bring the pontoon instead of the kick boat.

Arriving after breakfast in Pateros on Saturday, we set up the van on some choice waterfront real estate, tacked down our new awning, put the rocking chairs in place, said hi to the neighbors, and got ready to set up the pontoon. Jen helped me inflate, attach the side frames, and strap things down while I looked for the seat that ties the Colorado Craft together. No luck. Forgot it. Wouldn't have mattered if I didn't cause I forgot the oars too. Last minute packing; bad idea.

So I went down to my recruiter, Petty Officer Mark Pratt, who by all estimates is the commanding officer in fishing from shore on Lake Chopaka,



ka, and I signed up for Shore Patrol.

Most of the club had the good sense to bring a watercraft of some sort, and the flotilla heads out from central head quarters to the right or the left. Hoofers head south along the road until the cattle guard, turn toward the lake and walk the fence line back to shore. Mark's simple advice: see 'em, cast to 'em, hook 'em.

Along the reed line, previously only seen from my pontoon and assumed to be four feet of silt, fish amble in sporadic circles scaring up damsels, sucking on scuds and nymphs, and sip duns. Occasionally they make earth rattling jumps. I waded in carefully to what turns out mostly to be solid ground, cast to the first sipper, and scared every fish within blocks.

Retreat; try again. This time with feeling. Wham, a 24" bow took me out, down and through the weeds. Here's the next best part of shore fishing: bringing 'em in. My first horse got good and tangled around a weed clump that he used for ballast to win the fight. I feed line until he got free of the weeds and before he broke me off, and then redirected his energies. I doubt this has much in common with bringing in drunk sailors, but I did feel a tad bit of that thing that happens when you know you are smarter than an ani-



mal with the brain the size of a pea.

Mark said later that if he had caught every fish he'd touch, he'd have caught 60 plus fish instead of the paltry 20 or so he got Saturday. I was lucky to get a second after my initial luck. But I insisted in casting dry flies and I stayed too long in one place, and I only caught fish that catch themselves, so I could count my quarry on one hand.

A few or a bunch hardly mattered. Big fish jumped in all directions. And the mayfly and damsel duns covered my hat, face and shoulders. Casting in the small pockets free of weeds required practice and patience, and the hits were exhilarating. I headed right
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Club Aims and Purposes

The purpose of this club shall be:

1. To improve and increase the sport of Fly Fishing in the State of Washington.
2. To promote and work for the betterment of trout streams and lakes.
3. To encourage and advocate the conservation and increase of trout, steelhead, and salmon in state waters.
4. To promote a campaign of education against pollution in streams, lakes or Sound waters of the State of Washington.
5. To encourage and assist others — particularly young persons of high school age—to become fly fishers and true conservationists.

Above, Shore Patrol XO shows off his kitchen skill on the annual fish fry. Below, half the reason to go to Chopaka is the view from the campsite.



Fishing Reports

"Chopaka, 2017

by David Schorsch

The usual weather greeted us as Lynn and I arrived at Chopaka on Thursday morning. Shunshine, followed by high winds, followed by sunshine, followed by torrential rain and hail, followed by high wind from the opposite direction, followed by sunshine. Like I said, the usual... Luckily for us and the other 29 folks who joined us at the annual club outing, the weather was great for the remainder of the Memorial Day week-



Above, never take Lake Chopaka planning for granted. Dave Schorsch loads up food.

end! Friday featured a huge mayfly spinner fall, and some pretty good top water action on adult Damsels. We got several fish on olive mini leeches too. A brownish compara dun or sparkle dun worked pretty well most of the trip for a searching pattern.

Happy hour Saturday was well attended, with heavy use of the grill and beverage coolers. Birthday songs were sung, and lost members were thought of... Frivolity ensued, along with some music.

The Sunday pancake breakfast was great, as usual, thanks to Dick Brening and his hearty crew. The cowboy coffee was still, well, cowboy coffee...

Lynn and I had to leave a day or two early, due to work issues, so we only got to fish again for a while Sunday after breakfast. The olive leeches failed to produce, and fishing was very slow

for two hours of trolling. On the way back to camp, we saw some rises, and covered them with the sparkle dun. Bang! Fish on, and on, and on! The day was salvaged in a hurry! It turned out, the splashy rises we saw were trout taking black flying ants on the surface. We killed one for dinner, and it's stomach was packed with black ants, about size 12. Learn something every day!

We broke camp and headed out mid afternoon, had dinner in Leavenworth, and were home by dark. Overall, a pretty good weekend! I'm looking forward to other reports of the fishing after we left!

Corbett Lake, BC

by Bob Burdick

This year's trip by my group (Bergquist, Neu, Swanson, Larson myself and 2 others) to Corbett Lake in BC between May 14-19, a week before the annual club outing to Chopaka, was one of our best ever. I continue to enjoy Corbett every year because of the natural beauty of the lake, it's surroundings, the lodge and cabin set-up, the fish that remain large and plentiful and especially the new fishing challenges that crop up, teaching me a little more about our craft every year. Here are a few additional factoids and some unanswered questions.

For instance, in talking to a 70 year old fisherman from Bellingham at the boat launch at the end of the trip on Friday Afternoon, he shared with me his success that day using a large black ant pattern during the Callibaetis hatch indicating he had non-stop hook-ups on many beautiful large chrome fish in the 20+ inch range that he called "holdovers" and he gave me a sample fly(see attachment) I had a hard time believing that the trout that were keyed on callibaetis would prefer the ant pattern until I discussed it a little later with another Canadian fishermen who had fished Corbett for 40 years and the Corbett groundskeeper who explained that every year about this time there is a daily hatch of black ants that lasts for about 10 days to 2 weeks. This year

the ant fall started about a week before we arrived and was just petering out when we left. During our stay we apparently could have had great success if we had known this fact. The ant fall must have been very subtle as I did not see a single ant on the water all week. The fisherman who had fished Corbett for 40 years also said that there is a "poison" in the ants that makes the fish sick, so there is often a 2 or 3 days



lull in the fishing after an intense ant fall. So next year we'll come loaded with ant patterns.

I did not learn just how one identifies a "holdover" from the 2000 planted fish that were dumped in the lake just 2 days before our arrival. Does anyone know the answer to that question? At the South end of the lake, we caught a lot of dark fish that I assumed were spawners or trying to spawn, but noted that most of the fish at the North end of the lake were chrome bright. Does anyone know if my assumption is accurate?

On Friday for most of the day there was little wind and the intense mid-day sun lit up the lake bottom making fish easy to see. Chironomid fishing was slow for most of the morning at 20 feet which was puzzling since it had been good the previous day. While marveling at the view into the depths

of the lake with old logs, branches, a water-logged dock, springs, and grass and moss it finally dawned on me that perhaps the reason we were getting so few bites on chironomids at 20 feet was that the sunlight was penetrating so deep that the fish felt insecure and left the shallower areas of the lake for deeper darker and presumably safer depths. Sure enough, when I anchored up at 30 feet, and fished at 28 feet I boated 6 big chrome fish in a little less than an hour with no indication during that time that anyone else on the lake was taking any fish. Another person of our party joined me after a bit and also began hooking fish at 30 feet before we both moved to try to intercept the Calibaetis hatch. At the bar late Friday I shared my "discovery" with the 40 year fisherman who laughed and said "well, there's always fish at 30 feet in this lake, I'm not surprised". The bottom line seems to be that when the chironomid bite is off at 20 feet, you might get to them at 30 feet, if you are willing to tolerate breezes that twist your boat around, and have more fish that break off by stubbing their hook on the anchor line.

In recent years I have had great success by fishing chironomids just over

the transom on a fast sink line directly below the tip of the rod at depths of 15 to 20 feet eliminating the bobber altogether. By suspending the chironomid directly below the rod tip, a strike almost always drives the hook into the fishes upper lip and nose and one gets a secure set with almost no lost fish due to the hook pulling out. A slow gentle finger twist retrieve in the vertical position often improves the strike rate. I noticed that the 40 year guy was still using only bobbers and smiled to think that we're still one up on him in the technique department and gloated a little when we were hooking fish when he wasn't.

I must have 300 to 400 chironomids in my fly box, but stuck with a black snow cone on a #16 hook which worked all week. I tried a red worm that imitates the red larvae, but without success. In looking back over the years I've never run into a situation when a red, green or other other color or a "chromie" was better than something black with a silver rib. Has anyone else?

For years we've trolled the lake, or cast nymphs or dry flies along the edges of the lake taking fish with our offerings proffered at probably no more

than 5 feet of water in the top of the water column. However, Tom Neu's early observation that he could get strikes on a variety of flies (other than the Dali Lama, white leach, or Stillwater nymph) on a deep sinking line cast near the shoreline was helpful since there were frequent times when the fish wouldn't take near the surface, but would take at 10 to 20 feet on a sinktip. I also found that it was productive at times to set up one rod with a chironomid at 20 feet, while casting another rod with a damsel, wooly bugger, or leach on a sink tip line.

Early in the morning between 7 and 10 as well as in the afternoon between 4 and 7 there are hatches of #18 and #20 midges. Despite many attempts over the years, fooling the fish with something like a comparadun, or adams, has only rarely been successful. A #20 midge this year with the red tail called a "scotty" however was occasionally successful, taking another step forward in solving this puzzle.

The minimal costs of this trip, \$500 total per person for the week, continue to be a huge bargain and something everyone in the club should consider taking advantage of. Until next year.

South Sound Cutthroat

by Bob Burdick



I have fly fished for searun cutthroat in Puget Sound off and on for many years never really quite connecting on more than 2 or 3 fish per trip and collecting numerous skunks along the way, either from the beach or by boat. In February while fishing with a particular guide for Steelhead we chatted about his steep learning curve for sound cutthroat over the years, and how he had finally accumulated enough knowledge and hot spots so he felt he could be consistently successful almost every time he went out.

Needing a birthday present for my newly 16 year old grandson, I elected to give it another whirl and on the Saturday before Memorial day we launched at high tide with the guide somewhere

Left, the infamous Black Ant. Below, a Corbett Lake Beauty

Hannan Lake



Bob Burdick and his grandson hit the South sound for some Searun Cutthroat and Coho Fishing

in the South Sound (I've been sworn to secrecy) on a sunny day with almost no wind. Once the tide began to turn we immediately were into cutthroat on several different beaches. Balls of anchovies began showing being chased by juvenile coho and soon we were into them too. At the end of the day we had caught and released about 15 cutthroat to 17 inches and 5 coho from 1 ½ to 2 ½ pounds.

Although numerous guide books suggest that you need to imitate chum salmon fry, marine worms, crabs, etc with your fly, it seemed to me that these fish were indiscriminant and would strike any color or size of fly as long as it was moving. Needless to say, I've retracted my skepticism about the likely-hood of being successful while fishing the sound and the old dictum seemed to be true "You've got to know the territory". Should you wish to do something similar contact me to get this guides name and contact info.

Lago Gatun, Panama

by Robert Thorpe

Some members asked me to provide notes of Panama—Lago Gatun bass fishing in Feb. We went with guide out of Melina Hote -IBeautiful full serviced historic hotel—near Millflores—west of East Canal locks. We trolled for snook and tarpin on way to backwaters-no strikes—but saw pictures

of trophy fish at hotel —We arrived at shallow areas—lots of lillie pads —bank cover. We had only light tackle—using minnow simulators—after catching 40+/- we decided to fish only for size—pulling lures away from smaller bass and recasting---for“Sargent” (Big Mouth)—name for fish brought to canal from States and an occasional peacock bass. We had bets on first. largest and most—3 of us fishing—Anne content to watch Tucoons ,parrots, Howler monkeys', alligators e tc.l Friend LJ-first and largest-wife Dunia(Panama native) most.---Lost count after 80 fish--in less than 2 hrs.----The guide insisted we keep larger ones—filled about 40 out for us for \$10. we prepare great cookout—my fish receipe-white wine 'garlic , 'lemon ,black pepper- Home fries, fresh PanamaFruits and great dry white wine -Delicious--

It was Carnival time—great time to go—We did get their views on US National politics—very educational.—WFFC Outdoor chair Dave/others asked me to bring Panama details to Mtg—Will be fishing -Trout -Rob Roy/Laramie River No Plate and Brooks Lake in Wyo in June. So—will bring Panama details top July Meeting—Panama is great place to take family/ friends.

On the fly cont.

out the second day and then a third, catching a couple each time. Mark checked in on me before heading to the next honey hole and lent me a fly or two along with words of wisdom.

I've never covered less ground on the lake in my life, but think about it; most of the guys are fishing in the reeds too. They just had to row there. I'll never bring a boat again.



Above, Pat Becker never fails to lend a hand while, below, fishing has to take a back seat to cocktail hour as the Hagens and Mike Wearne relax with club sanctioned beverages



Muddy Trails, Mosquitoes and A Fish of a Lifetime

by Ron Tschetter

June 12th started off like any other day in a fishing paradise. David Cad-sand, the operator/owner of Rock Island Fishing Camp had suggested a “new” lake for us to fish.

To backtrack a bit, WFFC member Don Simonson (fly caster extraordinaire – believe it!) and myself left the overcrowding of Puget Sound with the goal of bliss, solitude and, hopefully catch a few fish. Don has been fishing these lakes for over 45+ years and knows this area well. But this particular lake is one off his radar and mine, one that neither of had ever fished.

For those of you that are not familiar with Rock Island Fishing Camp it is situated on the Nehalliston Plateau at the ~4,200’ level just northwest from Little Fort British Columbia. The camp serves, along with Rock Island Lake, 24 other lakes with 14 having boats available to guests for a variety of fishing challenges. It’s a great place for fishing, exploring and adventure.

Don and I left camp mid morning in search of the trailhead that leads to this lake. Dave had outlined its location per a roughly drawn directional map; kilometer marker here, kilometer marker there, big curve here. We finally arrived at the vaguely marked trailhead. Don wisely marked our start via GPS to insure we’d get back in case we’d get too far off track. With the GPS set



Don Simonson marks our trail head location via GPS

we plunged into the forlorn forest via a muddy trail with mosquito’s buzzing in our ears ready to discover a new fishing experience.

I think Don would agree that for, most of the day, fishing this lake was lack-luster. Both of us would catch an occasional fish, and lots of misses. We were about a ½ hour from packing up and heading back up the trail when I heard Don yell that he thought he had “grandpa” on. I was about 150 feet away from him in my own boat and could see his rod was bent pretty well. But while I thought the fish was probably larger than what we had been catching and I didn’t pay it much mind.

I then heard Don use the word “a monster” and then declare that his net (a small float tube type) isn’t going to be big enough. It suddenly dawned on me that Don has done a lot of fishing over the years and if he using terms “monster”, “like a salmon” this fish just might be bigger than I’m thinking. I shouted that I have a bigger net and I’d row right over to help out.

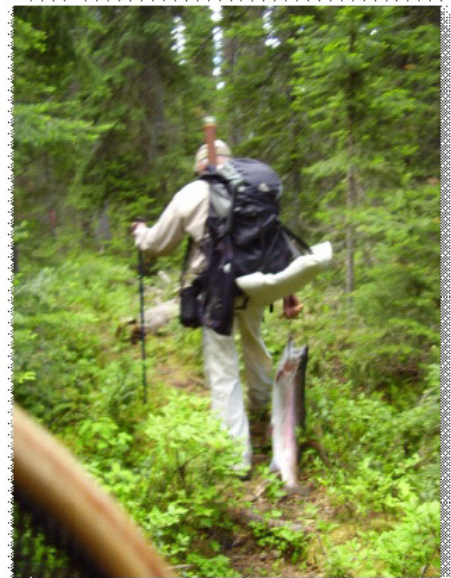
Then I saw this fish briefly flash below the surface. I could not believe my eyes; this fish was absolutely huge. I actually thought it was an optical illusion!

It is a pleasure to watch a pro. Don was playing this fish, side pressure here, fish would turn, side pressure the other way. Finally, the fish was becoming noticeably tired and finally laid on the surface where I tried to use my net. I almost laugh about that this incident now; because the only thing that fit in my net was its head! So much for my larger net! That mistake gave “grandpa” a new lease of life and off he went plunging down to new depths. But Don hung on, kept on playing him until the fish again came to the surface.

We then decided that the ONLY way this fish is going to be secured is I’m going to have to finger hook him by the gill plate and NOT MISS or Don may use his ‘fish bonker’ me. Don, as usual, played it like the pro gradually leading him to me this second time and I gently felt around his colossal gill plate (harder than you think when your adrenaline is sky high) then hooked him with my finger securely. This was the largest trout I’ve ever handled and I was shaking like leaf. Don was as cool as a cucumber.

This is a fish of a lifetime. The official weight back at camp was 14.5 pounds, 34 inches. A beautifully proportioned fish if I’ve ever seen one from a rather small lake. Oh, regarding the name of the lake? ‘Ten Cent Lake’ (a term long used by this club for “none of your business!”)

So there, WFFC historian! Check our clubs gold pin buttons and old fish records. Is this the largest rainbow trout ever taken by a club member on a fly? I bet it is!



On the way out, nearly 15 lbs of ‘extra’ weight!



WFFC member Don Simonson with his 14 1/2 pound, 34 inch Rainbow taken on a fly June 12, 2017



Washington Fly Fishing Club

P.O. Box 639

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June 2017

Meeting Announcement



Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the Seattle Tennis Club, 922 McGilvra Blvd. E.

This month's program is on June 20. The Wet Fly hour begins at 5:30 PM and dinner is served at 6:45 PM.

This month: Orvis of Bellevue fishing manager Jason Cotta, will present one of the most informative fishing programs we've had in several years. Jason has been working at Orvis for the last 4 years as their fishing manager, and has a long pre-Orvis history of fly fishing at various places in the Northwest. His talk and slide show is titled "Where to fish locally 365 days of the year". This presentation will be a synthesis of salt water, river and creek, lake, trout, bass, and carp fishing so no matter the time or day of the year, you'll go away with ideas on where to fish. Got one-half day off in November—fish the Green River Gorge for steelhead, or in September fish off Alki for Coho, or in June wade the Cedar River for trout, or in May fish Lake Washington for bass, or June fish Green Lake for spawning Carp, or in April fish Lone lake for trout. This is a can't miss opportunity to soak up a hoard of local knowledge that will be relevant for the next several years. See you there!