

Creel Notes from the



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

Website: www.wffc.com

Member of



MMXVI No. 1

February, 2016

President's Riffle

By President Gary Bergquist



February
2016 Creel
Notes



I recently sent WDFW my "vote" on establishing what it describes as "steelhead gene banks" for selected rivers of the Lower Columbia River.

The "balloting" is open until the 26th of this month. You may direct your ballot to TeamVancouver@dfw.wa.gov. The "election" is between two sets of streams; Grays and Chinook rivers vs Mill, Abernathy and Germany Creeks. You will find a suggested letter on the Wild Fish Conservancy's website which supports the Grays and Chinook Rivers as the preferred option or do as I did with a short response in favor of those rivers as well as a question as to why all the streams in both options were not an option on WDFW's ballot. Somehow "voting" for rivers in connection with steelhead restoration seems somewhat child-like to me.

We should applaud the rather belated acknowledgment by WDFW that its steelhead hatchery program has been and continues to be deleterious for the recovery of wild steelhead; however, it is most likely in response to pressure as a consequence of listings of steelhead populations under the endangered species act. Are factors other than hatcheries involved? Of course. Hatcheries are only one of what are generally regarded as the 4 H's; habitat, harvest, hydro and hatcheries but that does not answer the question of why WDFW still wants to dump more hatchery steelhead into our rivers..

More fundamental questions remain.

WDFW has been "managing" Washington's, our, steelhead for in excess of 70 years. Seventy years. According to its own literature, in 2004 the then director of the agency "challenged" the agency to develop a Steelhead Management Plan which was deemed necessary "... because in spite of seventy years of conservation efforts

directed at the state's steelhead stocks, many of these stocks are at a fraction of their historical numbers. Five of the seven distinct population segments that exist in Washington are currently federally listed under the Endangered Species Act." (Underscoring supplied). In spite of WDFW's conservation efforts? Unfortunately it is probably more accurate to say because of WDFW's efforts, or the lack thereof. Where have all the wild steelhead gone?

SEVENTY YEARS. Really? No, that comment was made in 2004 so it is more like **EIGHTY YEARS**. Really.

Steelhead can live for up to 11 years. How many more generations of wild steelhead can we entrust to the management of WDFW? The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) tells us in its 2013 Viability Analysis that 12 of 20 Puget Sound populations are at high risk of extinction. And it took us how long to figure this out?

Ok. So now the Feds are on the job. Not to worry.

Continued on page 2

Inside this Issue

- Page 1.....February Program
- Page 3.....Comments on the Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries Plan
- Page 4.....Boyd Aigner Award
- Page 5.....February Speaker
- Page 5 Bob Burdick's trip to Argentina
- Page 7.....Down Memory Lane

Continued from page 1

Since the listing of Puget Sound steelhead eight years ago National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) a department within NOAA, has still not adopted a recovery plan for listed Puget Sound steelhead. (NMFS is the agency which has had its biologic opinions repeatedly rejected by a federal district court.) As you may be aware WFFC is among the parties which have served to a Notice of intent to Sue NOAA/NMFS over the failure to act...that is, to follow the law. Keep your fingers crossed.

You realize of course that NOAA/MNFS are agencies of the United States Department of Commerce? Yup. Right along with the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Development Administration and like agencies. Think about that for a minute. One wonders what in the hell the overall writ of this department has to do with protection of endangered species and where that ranks in the department's priorities. Seems to me given its epic failures in connection with wild steelhead and wild salmon in the Columbia River system all the Department of Commerce is concerned with are macerated steelhead and salmon. Ok, maybe carve out canned salmon.

Restoration of wild steelhead is in the hands of a state agency which has failed in this matter over a term of more than 80 years and a Federal agency charged with economic matters. Perhaps the challenges to our wild steelhead, as well as wild salmon, should be in agencies other than WDFW and The United States Department of Commerce. The Departments of Natural Resources and Ecology at the state level and the Department of the Interior and EPA at the federal level come to mind. There certainly maybe other agencies but we should seriously consider the notion of stripping WDFW and the Department of Commerce of any responsibility for the protection and restoration of wild steelhead and wild salmon.

I stumbled across a short video while rambling around on the Wild Fish Conservancy web site (<http://wildfishconservancy.org>) which gives one a notion of what our rivers in the Pacific Northwest must have looked like prior to the arrival of "civilization" and its subsequent degradation of our rivers and habitat. Google: *Above Iliama*. You will want to look for a video on Vimo made by Jason Ching. The next time you read or hear statements from those "managing" salmon and steelhead that such and such river has or will experience "historic" returns consider the baseline being used.

Creel Notes

...is the official publication of the Washington Fly Fishing Club. Subscription is free with membership.

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Club officers and chairmen can be contacted by logging in the WFFC website then selecting email (upper right corner). Button selection and message box will appear on scroll down

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.



Washington
Fly Fishing Club

P.O. Box 639 Mercer Island, Washington 98040

January 22, 2016
Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
2127 8th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632
info@lcfwb.gen.wa.us
VIA EMAIL AND US MAIL

Dear Sir/Madam
The Washington Fly Fishing Club joins with and adopts the comments of Scott Hagen which are as follows:
“Comments on the Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries Plan

How did the HSRG determine that hatchery fish spawning in the wild are 50% as productive as wild fish? The data shown on pages 133 and 134 on hatchery Coho smolt releases during years 2008 to 2010 shows that an average of 600,000 hatchery smolts were released. The returning fish averaged 384, and some of those were wild fish. This equates to a fitness rate of less than 10%, a number that is backed up by many recent studies that have compared wild pair reproductive success rates to hatchery pairs spawning in the wild. Hatchery/wild pairs don't do much better.

If a realistic number were used instead of 50%, it would be obvious that this plan will fail to recover our wild stocks.

On pages 2 and 3 of Appendix 1, Strategies and Measures, Working Hypotheses, bullets 4,5,7,and 9 are almost certainly not true, according to many studies. Hatcheries were put in place with the false promise that they would mitigate the effects of the dams on the Columbia and other habitat damage and allow the continued overharvest of salmon and steelhead. They have failed to do so. We now know that hatcheries do a great deal of damage to wild stocks through interbreeding, competition, and the attraction of vast numbers of predatory birds. The tiny bit of reduction in the release of hatchery salmonids that is proposed will do little to stop the decline of wild stocks.

On page 5 of Appendix 1, Measures, using local wild fish for hatchery brood stock was tried on Snyder Creek in the Olympic Peninsula. It did not improve the reproductive success rate of the hatchery raised fish. The project was finally abandoned. The hatchery environment rewards the wrong smolts and the wrong behaviors. Once they are released into the wild, few survive.

On page 8, Appendix 1, I see no timeline to force the implementation of selective harvest gear on commercial fishing in the Columbia River or the salt.

There are almost no hard dates for the Implementation Work Schedule.

here can be no recovery of wild stocks if this plan is allowed to be implemented.

Respectfully,
Scott Hagen”

Mr. Hagen is a member of the Conservation Committee of the Washington Fly Fishing Club and we fully support his comments.

Sincerely

Gary Bergquist
President

BOYD AIGNER
COMPETITION
FOR 2016
By: Bill Neal,
Awards Committee
Chairman



As announced at last month's Members meeting, the Boyd Aigner Fly Tying Competition for 2016 has started. The objective is for each participant to demonstrate his or her creativity and tying skills. Each participant is to submit a "best" fly in each of three categories and may submit only one set of flies. The Members of the Club will be the judges.

Here are the 2016 patterns:

- (1) Lady McConnell (dry), size 14— developed by Brian Chan, our Letch Lambuth winner for 2015;
- (2) Johnson's Beach Fly, size 6— developed by Les Johnson, our Letch Lambuth winner for 2014; and
- (3) An Atlantic salmon fly of the participant's choosing—the Club will provide to each participant a package of hooks and some basic materials to be used in conjunction with other materials that the participant may have or acquire.

The schedule for the Competition is as follows:

February Members' Meeting Display boxes and salmon fly materials distributed
April Members' Meeting Flies due
May Members' Meeting Judging
June Members' Meeting Winners announced

The winner will receive the special WFFC pin that was developed for the Competition, as well as having his or her name on a rotating plaque. Bob Burdick and I will serve as Coordinators for the Competition. Please contact either of us if you have any questions. Thank you for your participation and good luck to all.

Bill: (w) 206.892.2116; (h) 206.232.0603;
william.neal@stokeslaw.com

Bob: (h) 206.329.5948; reburdick@comcast.net

2015 Awards RECAP-Delayed

By: Bill Neal, Awards Committee Chairman

At our January Members meeting, we recognized a number of individuals who had made significant contributions to the Club and the community for the year 2015, as well as those who have entertained us with their deeds or misdeeds. Nevertheless, we missed a few.

We expect to wrap this up with a few minutes taken from the February Members meeting. Please join us for that. I will follow with a full report in the March Creel Notes. Thanks for your patience.

February Speaker

We are very fortunate, to have Tom Larimer come to Seattle on February 16th, 2016 from his home in Hood River Oregon to present to the WFFC "Is there any truth to all those myths about how to catch a steelhead on a fly". Tom originally grew up in the mid-West but fell in love with the Northwest many years ago. He is now the new national sales manager for G. Loomis Fly Fishing having turned most of his guiding service over to his partner Tom Harris. For many years Tom guided on the Deschutes, Sandy, Clackamas, and other rivers in Oregon, as well as numerous rivers in Alaska and in between river trips managed to write frequent articles for fly fishing magazines, design fly lines for Airflow as well as creating the Skagit Compact, the Skagit Switch, the Skagit intermediate, the Rage Compact and the Streamer Switch lines. A highly sought after conclave speaker, he is a revered Spey casting instructor and has recently put out a spey casting instructional video called "Skagit Revolution". In addition to his presentation, Tom will demonstrate how to tie his gorgeous tube flies during our happy hour.



Member Jaunts Bob Burdick

Estancia Maria Behety, Tierra Del Fuego, Argentina, Jan 21-31, 2016. As a fledgling spey caster I jumped at the invitation of fellow WFFC member Maury Skeith to accompany him on a 10 day trip to the fabled Rio Grande River, home to an annual January to April migration of huge sea-run brown trout numbering some 80,000. The run was established in the 1930s using fingerlings brought from England and subsequently nurtured to the point where no additional plants have been added since the year 2000.

After a tedious 48 hour journey to this ant-arctic outpost starting from Seattle and going through Houston, Buenos Aires, and the city of Rio Grande we were deposited at a guest house of this sheep ranch and introduced to our 6 English speaking guides, each guide paired to 2 clients per day with a daily rotation of guides. It was explained that the 32 beats on the river were spread out over 50,000 acres and shared with 42,000 sheep, and numerous guanacos, a cousin of the Saharan camel. All fishing was to be done by foot. The fishing day was to be broken into two phases with a morning period running from 9 to 12 on one beat followed by lunch, then a 4 hour siesta and then an evening period from 7 to 11:30 pm on another beat with dinner at mid-night.

Forewarned of constant winds upwards of 35 mph I spent my first 2 days on the water unwinding wimpy casts from around my rod, neck, and backpack. The wind whacked every D loop forcing me to eliminate snake rolls, perry-pokes and many snap-ts and forcing me to dip into my bag of tricks to include exaggerated roll casts, switch casts, and to invent new casts to fit the winds strength and direction. Finally establishing an occasional pedestrian launch by day three I had 4 fish to the hand! My previous experience with brown trout had led me to expect some fight but not nearly the energy or dynamics of rainbow trout or steelhead. Oh, was I wrong! Every single one of these fish that week was air-borne the instant the hook sank home, tail-walking all over the pool, and running me into my backing numerous times. And were they big! My 8 fish for the week averaged 13 pounds with a high of 18 1/2, exceeding the year in and year out estimate for the whole fish run of about 12 1/2 pounds. Maury's fish total was about the same.

Continued on Page 6

Expecting that the techniques used to fish for these fish would be similar to those we use for NW steelhead I was surprised in several ways. The most surprising thing was fly size and coloration. Expecting these fresh from the sea (20 miles away) fish to crush anything big, bright and gaudy, I learned that for whatever reason after a day or two in the river the fish favored very small, non-descript flies, as small as # 14. Big black buggers were reserved for fishing from dusk to 11 pm and dry flies, be they floaters, skaters, or greased liners were seldom used although on one windless evening I managed to get 12 rises to a Titanic. Presentation of the fly did not seem critical and drew strikes whether dead-drifted like nymphs, or jigged after a 45 degree downstream cast although there seemed to be periods when the fish would favor one presentation over another.

The guides also strongly recommended fishing all levels of the pools, constantly urging us to start our approach to each beat with a very light sink tip on the end of a dry line, and then changing to heavier and heavier tips if the lighter tip wasn't drawing strikes. For instance, observing an immediate strike after one cast with a heavy tip my guide insisted on changing to a lighter tip suggesting that the immediacy of the strike indicated the fish were feeding/ striking in the upper portion of the water column, and not on the bottom where that cast was destined. The majority of the fish seemed to be located in the slower parts of the beats, unlike our NW steelhead that can be found in both fast and slow water. Steeled in NW steelhead mantra, I was also chastised on my first fish for feeding line before setting the hook, the guides recommending a sharp upward lift the moment I felt the slightest tug.

All told, the 12 fishermen in camp landed 153 fish in 6 days, the top rod beaching 33 fish, with the next best total being two fishermen who netting 20 fish apiece. This was little less than the 172, I was told, which was the long time average for the last week in January. The largest fish caught was 20 ½ pounds, smallish compared to the river record which was estimated at 42 pounds.

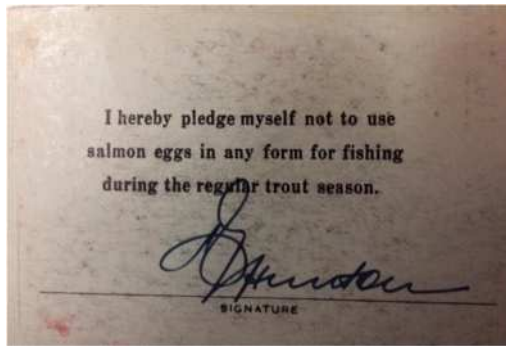
Would I go again? Absolutely, the number, size and fight in these fish was equal and probably greater than any other freshwater fishing opportunity I've experienced in my fishing career.



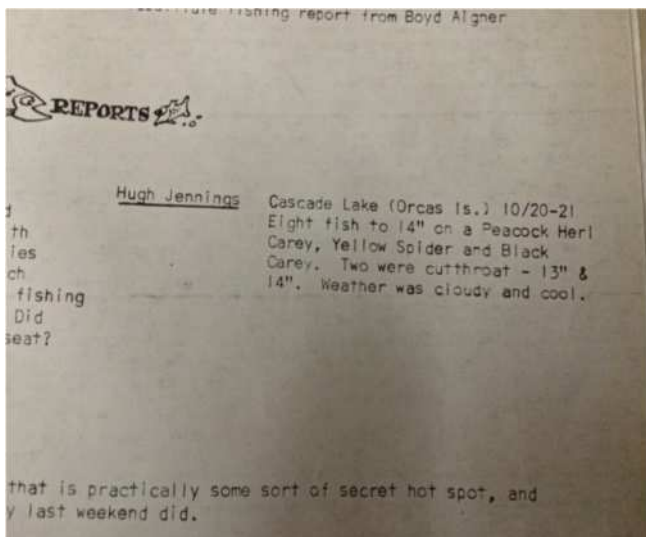
FINISHED WITH YOUR FLY FISHING MAGAZINES?

Bring them to our membership meetings and leave them on the end of the Ghillie Check-in table, or where ever the Ghillie may direct. If you see a magazine you would like to read, take it. Maybe your magazine will end up in the hands of a fellow member or shared with participants in programs supported by the WFFC. Just be sure you mark out or cut out your name and address on the mailing

Look what Gary Bergquist found! A membership card for the WFFC.....the first one issued. The back is interesting as it contains a pledge to not use salmon eggs for trout which differs from the current pledge asked of members.



Below is a fishing report from Hugh Jennings from a previous issue of Creel Notes. Hugh has been a member for 60 years! Thank you Hugh!!!!



On an icy Feb. morning, smallmouth bass types must be pretty devoted!!!!

Editor Notes

We are starting a new column called "Down Memory Lane". If you have some old photos or articles that you would like to be in Creel Notes you can email me at: deanne@edererinvestment.com. Or, give me a hard copy at the Monthly Dinner and I would be happy to make a copy and give you back the original.



Washington Fly Fishing Club
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Stamp
here

February, 2016

Meeting Announcement



Meetings are held on the third Tuesday February 16, of each month at the Seattle Tennis Club, 922 McGilvra Blvd. E.

The Wet Fly hour begins at 5:30 PM and dinner is served at 6:45 PM.

This month: The presenter at our February 16 meeting will be Tom Larimer (National Sales Manager for G. Loomis products), whose presentation is titled: "Is there any truth to all those myths about how to catch a steelhead on a fly?"