

Creel Notes from the



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



June, 2009



Hello all,

Great outing at Chopaka. While there, I had a discussion with some long-time members and as near as we could determine, it may have been our 50th annual trip to that lake. We had a good turnout and the fishing was quite good. The

fish were healthy, and many caught fish at 20 inches or larger. And of course, the scenery, food, and company were excellent.

Surveys – surveys. We have had a couple of them recently that we should discuss. The first, our membership interest survey, had good responses with 116 members responding. Thanks to each of you who took the time to fill it out. We have a lot of information, including several great suggestions, to digest and see what the survey tells us and how to best implement that information as it is understood. As the analysis of the data reveals trends, we will discuss the information at dinner meetings to keep the membership informed and involved.

The second survey is the land survey for our Yakima Home Waters project. The survey for the lease disclosed a potential conflict with an easement, but the issue has been resolved and we should still be in a position to build the project in July. **Mark Dewitt** is coordinating the construction effort and is looking for volunteers. If interested, let him know by signing up on the outings signup sheet.

Notice the upcoming events sections in the Creel Notes and on the Web site. Local area fly fishing industry folks are planning a get-together in Monroe at Lake Tapps on Saturday, June 20th. WFFC will be exhibitors there, and **Mike Wearne** will be coordinating our presence. The goal of the event is to attract people new to, or just beginning, fly fishing, and provide information to as many people as attend. The clubs and vendors there will

be responding to questions about our sport more and trying to sell less. Along similar lines, the Washington Trails Association is hosting Trail Fest at Rattlesnake Lake on July 18th, where the WFFC is supporting a fly fishing interest table to introduce people to fly fishing. **Bill Deters** will be coordinating our participation at that event.

I have heard that several members are travelling to Canada and Alaska in the near term for fishing. I hope many of us are able to stalk waters closer to home and share your findings with our membership, as well. I know that I enjoy reports of fishing trips in the Creel Notes, as do many of us, and I invite each of you to write a trip report to share your findings. As we all learn more, the club benefits. If you took a friend fishing or met one while out there, invite them to a dinner meeting. We'd like to meet them.

Go fishing and take a friend...

Pat Peterman
President 2009

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This Month's Meeting *by Steve Sunich*

Last chance to attend the WFFC "significant others" meeting. This features Tom Douglas at the Palace Ballroom on Wed., June 17th, at 5:30 pm (cocktail hour) and 6:45 pm (call to dinner). Remember, this is a Wednesday, not the typical Tuesday. The Palace Ballroom is at 2100 - 5th Avenue in downtown Seattle, at the corner of 5th & Lenora.

The price has been lowered this year to only \$33 per person!

To register, just go to the Member area of the WFFC website. If you do not want to pay online, you can use [this form](#), and send it to my home address with your check. Otherwise, you can call Steve Sunich at 425-746-1189 during the day.

The Creel Calendar

Jimmy Green Memorial Fly Fishing Fair and Casting Expo,

June 20th

From 9 am to 4 pm, at Lake Tye Park in Monroe. Designed to bring people into the sport. (Ask **Leland Miyawaki** about it.)

Trail Fest, July 18th

WFFC will support a fly fishing interest table at the event sponsored by the Washington Trails Association.

2009 Reel Recovery Washington State Retreat

by Kris Kristoferson

Reel Recovery's 2009 Washington State Retreat will be held September 14th to 16th at Canyon River Ranch, the new lodge south of Ellensburg and next to Red's Fly Shop. 2009 will mark Reel Recovery's fourth year of serving men in Washington, thanks to the generous financial support of both the WFFC and the WFFC Foundation, as well as the volunteer efforts of many WFFC members who have served as fishing buddies during the retreats. Be a part of it this year! You can learn more by visiting the Reel Recovery Web site (www.reelrecovery.org), or you can contact Kris Kristoferson for more information.

Creel Notes

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Jim van de Erve ... Editor and Publisher
425-489-0971 jimvde@comcast.net

President

Pat Peterman patpeterman@verizon.net

Co-1st Vice President

Bill Deters deterslukus@comcast.net

Co-1st Vice President

Peter Crumbaker wolf_feris2nd@hotmail.com

2nd Vice President

Steve Sunich sgsassociatesllc@cs.com

Secretary

Bob Burdick reburdick@comcast.net

Treasurer

Jim Morrison jamescmorrison@mailhome.com

Ghillie(s)

Jim Macdonald macdonaldco@msn.com
Mike Santangelo mikeonthefly@gmail.com

Trustees

Mike Wearne '07 Ed Sozinho '07
Rocco Maccarrone '08 Ed Pettigrew '08
Scott Hagen '09 Jim Young '09

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 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.

Les Johnson: Salmon in the Salt

by Jim van de Erve

When I've fished Puget Sound for salmon, I've dropped a herring down to the bottom. Fish a fly from a beach in a few feet of water? Yea, right!

But wait. At the May WFFC meeting, **Les Johnson** trotted out picture after picture of humongous salmon caught on a fly from shore. What gives?

Well, Les has been doing it successfully for 50-some odd years, and he's written several books to prove it. For those of us who have been resigned to dragging bottom, that's a revelation.

The History

Les admitted at the start of his presentation that it's difficult to come up with a program for the club, because so many members have fished the same waters for the same fish with many of the same flies. So, Les started with a history of saltwater salmon fly fishing. It began with pioneers such as the Stroulger brothers, who fished out of the Cowichan up on Vancouver Island in the '30's. They realized: why wait for the fish to come into the river? Why not go out to the salt after them? They did so with a famous fly called the Grey Ghost bucktail. Les showed a picture of the Stroulger brother with a 22-pound fish that in those days, according to Les, was average.

Other pioneers included General Noel Money, renowned fisherman on Vancouver Island in the '20's. And the legendary Roderick Haig-Brown, who Money mentored. But the movement wasn't limited to British Columbia, of course. Pioneers were also fishing in Washington waters. Men like Enos Bradner, Roy Patrick, Letcher Lambuth, Wes Drain, and many others—many of them members of WFFC. "These guys were giants," Les said.

Les himself got his start back in the '50's. Early on, he fished with his mother, who loved to catch coho on herring in Puget Sound. But Les' mom couldn't stand to see Les cut the bait into plugs. One day, Les took her bucktailing and a large coho slammed the bucktail fly. They boated a wild 15-pound native coho, and never fished with another herring.

Later, Les hooked up with an avid flycaster named **Bruce Ferguson**. "He and I spent a lot of time in the '70's trying to fiddle around with this fishery," Les said. "We thought we were creating

it." He laughs at the audacity of the thought. "We weren't."

Les routinely harkens back to those who went before. "The thing we miss is how much these guys brought to the table. We need to appreciate the giants more than we do."

Secrets of the Salt

After watching picture after picture of big salmon caught on flies from the beach, and getting plenty fired up doing so, the inevitable question was: what are the secrets of this fishery? Well, Les and Bruce have recently completed a book entitled, "Fly-Fishing for Pacific Salmon II."

In his presentation to the club, Les spoke about the baitfish that salmon go bonkers for in the salt, such as Hyperiid amphipod, which is an important source of food for coho early in the season. And sand lance, which is the most popular bait in Puget Sound. And sardines, shrimp, herring, and smelt. Les' book contains many flies originated or tied by Les or Bruce, and others by club members Letcher Lambuth, **Preston Singletary**, **Leland Miyawaki**, **Richard Embry**, **Steve Sunich**, and others.

Les highlighted the success of flies that have a pink, vermilion, or orange strip on the median line. He also said, "When you get close to rivers, you have to have a selection."

Where to catch them? Virtually every photograph that Les showed was of fisherman with big fish on an isolated beach. Les suggested getting "Walks and Hikes on the Beaches of Puget Sound", by Harvey Manning. About that presumption that salmon feed and travel in deep water: Not so, says Les. Oftentimes, salmon would rather feed and travel in shallow water near the shore. In the book, Les and Bruce talk about how salmon can find the easiest source of food by going to a point of land (or an island), especially where there is an eddy that is down current.

How to find the salmon? Les indicated that you can often find them by finding baitfish swirling on the surface near a beach, or by following birds who are feeding on the baitfish. And in the book, they say that the most common trigger for salmon to feed is the tide (with an offset).

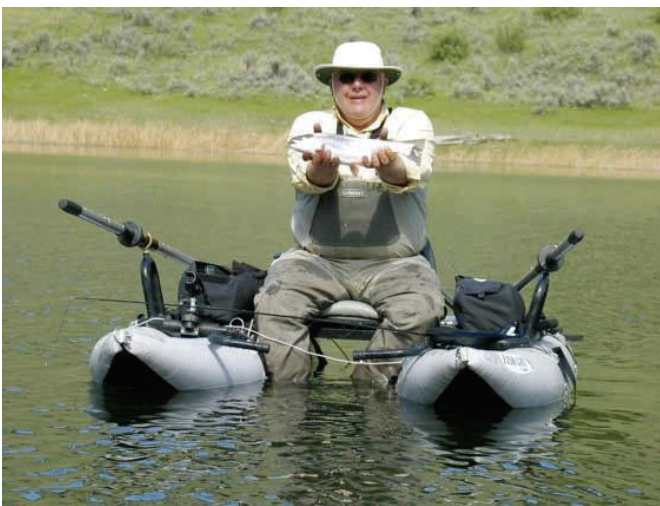
After seeing huge salmon after huge salmon, and hearing how it's done, it was pretty hard not to get charged up about this fishery.

REPORTS

Chopaka Lake – Post Outing

by Dick Brening

It's 7:15 on Wednesday morning, the sky is a light, clear blue, and the temperature is 47 degrees. The sun has just topped the ridge across the lake and it is slowly warming me as I sit here sipping my freshly brewed coffee. The sun is at just the right angle to make the water in front of my campsite crystal clear. A large rainbow trout is busily defending his feeding area next to the old sunken pram. He is charging at the intruding fish as they search for feed, trying to drive them from "his" water. He seems to be doing more defending than eating! A male Ruddy-duck with a bright blue beak and a bit of an attitude swims past looking for a potential mate. The swallows are making skimming passes over the lake's surface, picking off tiny insects, and the familiar call of the Red-winged Blackbird is clear in the morning silence. Small insects hover over the water and sporadic rises dimple the surface across the entire lake. For most of these rises, the fish don't even break the surface; only occasionally do you see a fin or a tail, but the distinctive "ring of the rise" or the sound of a "slurp" signals feeding trout. I really need to get out there soon, but right now this coffee tastes so good!



Don Barton on Chopaka

By Tuesday afternoon, all of the WFFC club members who were here for the Memorial Day outing had departed, except for the Lindblooms and the Brenings. Unlike previous Wednesday mornings following the outings, when only two or three campsites would remain occupied, this year every campsite is filled and will remain that way for the rest of the week. Another fly club has begun setting up in the tree-lined arm of the south campground and members of the Northwest Women's Flyfishing club are gathering near the large pine tree at the far end of the north campground. It is certainly not like the welcomed solitude of previous years! I guess that the word of the success of the Chopaka Lake rehab has gotten out. The vehicles of the day fishers are also beginning to trickle in and crowd the grassy area above the boat launch. Still, this early in the morning, there are only two fishermen on the lake. Fishing on Chopaka Lake is a late morning activity. I think I'll just enjoy the scenic beauty and the warmth of the sun for a while longer. Now, I hear my wife, Marje, and son, Kevin, beginning to move around behind me.

The fishing has changed each day since I arrived. The Chironomid fishers are doing the best with daily fish counts well into the twenties. For me, slowly mooching a large fly at the end of my sink-tip line worked best during the days of the outing. My son tied up a large fly that worked well, he called it "Spirale". It is similar to the Thin Mint pattern. It is very colorful and represents I know not what. On Monday, just by luck, I took a 16-inch long rainbow on a dry mayfly imitation (Dick Thompson's Upright Moose Mane Sub-shank Parachute), but saw no mayfly duns. Tuesday afternoon, although there were no visible rises for naturals, I was able to get some very impressive and splashy takes on my mayfly emerger pattern cast to within a foot or two of the reeds. In the south-facing bay across from the campground, I landed nine rainbows using that pattern in a little over two hours. They were good-size fish, ranging between 16 and 19 inches. I saw only an occasional mayfly dun on the water, but there were reports of a heavy mayfly hatch near the reeds along the campground shore.

Wednesday, the damsels arrived. At around noon I was fishing the reed beds south of the campground and the reed stalks quickly became covered with tan damsels drying their wings. The big fish moved in for the feed and I had a lot of activity. I found that

the best fly in my box that day was a pattern similar to my successful mayfly emerger from yesterday, only this one was tied without a hair tail, just a single strand of Crystal Flash (which was my attempt to give it a trailing shuck). Unfortunately, I was only two for eight in getting these big fish to my net. Their aerobatic actions plunging deep into the reeds were hard to stop and nearly always resulted in a long-line release, leaving my line tangled among the reeds. I did have one very aggressive fish (it may have been my largest fish of the week) take me half-way into my backing as it headed south along the shoreline before going airborne and escaping with my fly and tippet. The trout were all very healthy and very active when hooked. They ranged in size from 14" to reports of over 20". The largest fish that I successfully landed measured 19½".

Thursday was the only overcast day we had and fishing for me was very slow. The Chironomid fishers continued to do well. Friday around noon, the southerly winds built to such a tempo that it all but shut down the fishing activity for the rest of the day. Saturday, we awoke to clear skies, but all the air mass that moved into B.C. yesterday was now headed south for Oregon. Reluctantly, we left.

First Outing *by Ron Tschetter*

I've heard more stories about the road leading to the Chopaka Lake than the fishing. Tales of overheated cooling systems, broken shock absorbers, boiling brake lines, flat tires, and worst fates reserved for vehicles with trailers. Being this was my first trip to Chopaka, I crept up the steep road slowly, making sure I had plenty of right hand 'edge margin'.

I'm a relatively new member of the club, not familiar with names and faces. So when I drove up to the Chopaka campsite in a perpetual loop looking for evidence that I was at the right location, **Pete Baird's** wife Lynn took pity and asked the right question, "Are you with the club"? Now found, I set up camp right behind Pete and Lynn's motor home for the weekend.

Given that I was unsure of WFFC camp routine, I figured it was best to watch for crowd development. When a bunch started to gather under the shelter on Saturday evening, I knew something was up. Saturday's meal was to be an open self-serve barbeque. I

watched preparations develop, a charcoal pit dug, a huge grill laid over the hot coals by **Mark Pratt**. Then came a diversity of steaks, chicken, and assorted other meats brought by members. Other appetizers began to accumulate, either contributions of each member's culinary skills or unique purchases. Since I didn't bring anything to cook other than soup, I missed out on using the charcoal pit. But anyone who went away hungry, soup or not, had only themselves to blame.

Naturally I was anxious to get fishing. It seems the southeast end of the lake attracts the largest cluster of anglers. That's where I headed. The end is shallow and clear enough to see fish with my Polaroids, lots of them, working the whole area in 8 to 12 feet of water. I noted mostly chironomid fisherman, bobbers floating straight out in front of them with those zombie stares. Since I'd had some success with chironomids in the past (and I've learned that you have to have success with them or most fishermen will not even try them), a chironomid lash-up would be my starting ticket. I rigged up a 14' leader with a black size-12 tungsten chironomid and no sooner got it in the water than I got a fish. But that was it, no more bobber movement. I then changed color, bang, immediately another fish, then same thing, nothing. I never really figured out what size or color the fish were actually taking. I had to change color or size periodically to get any consistent action. I also experimented with a number of wet flies. Same business, you could fool them once, and then better switch to something else to capture their attention.

Again, I took my queue as a gathering commenced around the shelter late Sunday afternoon. This evening was the tempera fish fry night. I was wondering, how in the earth are they going to cook deep fry for all these people? Answer, 10 lbs of cod cut into bite sized chunks then dipped in a tempera batter. Chief pilot and chef **Jim McRoberts** was armed with a propane deep fryer set to churn out piece after piece of delicious pieces of cod for the whole group. **Pete Baird** took over as co-pilot/chef and continued the feast till the last morsel of cod was done. More salsa, salads, chips, brownies, pie, even ice cream continued throughout the evening, adding to everyone's waistline.

I don't think people realize how unusual it is to get a crowd together like this, a tribute to the tradition of this club. We had quite a number. I'm sure everyone caught fish. I'd give the fishing a mark of

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very good. Nice size fish, too, many in the 13” to 16” range and a few (I accurately measured) at a little over 19”. Not bad for a lake that had been rehabilitated only 1½ years ago.

I gave myself plenty of left-hand “edge margin” on the way down the steep road, keeping my old Explorer in low. The road is really no problem as long as you take it slow.

Lesson number one for new members: Go on an outing. It’s the only way to really match names with the faces and meet some really wonderful people.

Sprague Lake, May 15th and 17th

by Bob Burdick

In 2007, the WSWF treated Sprague Lake with Rotenone because of an overgrowth of scrap fish and a pronounced decline in the quantity and quality of trout. In 2008, it was planted with 160,000 1½-pound triploids, and this year it was planted with additional triploids. Later this year, it will be planted with large-mouth bass, crappie, and catfish with the goal of restoring the lake to its former niche as a warm-water lake with good trout fishing.

After reading game department reports, other fly club reports, and various blogs about how phenomenal the trout have been growing, and how well it was fishing, **Mike Santangelo** and I decided to investigate and fished it on the above dates. The lake is 3½ hours of freeway travel from Seattle, and parallels I-90 on the way to Spokane. It’s accessed by both a public and private boat launch on its south side, as well as from two resorts on the lake. Overnight accommodations can be found at two motels in the small town of Sprague, and bar and restaurant food is available there also. It’s open year-around, and was crystal clear on the days we were there with eight to ten feet of visibility. It’s five miles long and about ½ mile wide, with a maximum depth of 20 feet, and has many shallow bays and a variety of reed beds. Strangely, it has very little weed growth, with a rocky, muddy bottom. Water temperature was 60 degrees. Insect activity was almost suffocating with various types hatching on the water and permeating the air, to the point that at times we almost wished we had mosquito nets. Each day on the lake, we saw perhaps 15 to 20 gear fishermen

attracted to the bag limit of five fish daily, only two of which can be over 20 inches, and only two or three other fly fishermen.

And the fishing was just as touted—phenomenal! The 1½ pound triploids on the abundant lake feed had grown to an average size of three pounds and 18 to 20 inches, with this year’s plant averaging 12 to 14 inches. The bigger fish were all football-shaped with huge bodies, indicating their rapid growth. They were very active running and slashing and jumping once hooked, numerous times getting into our backing, and were silver bright. The biggest fish, weighing about five pounds, was credited to Mike. We tried a variety of flies, but chironomids fished at about 15 feet seemed most productive on these two days. Despite the cloud of insects on the water, we saw very little fish surface activity. On Friday the chironomid bite was on when we started fishing at noon, and stopped at 3 pm. On Sunday the chironomid bite didn’t start until 2:30 and was still going on at 5 pm when we had to stop. Each day we hooked about ten fish, landing about five.

It’s unclear just how much longer this summer this lake will remain productive, as it’s sure to warm up at some point to where the fish are sluggish. Also on Friday a small part of the lake was turning over, although we saw no evidence of that on Sunday. With so little pressure, it’s sure to be productive in the fall, and again next spring at ice out when the 2008 plant should grow to 20 to 25 inches.

Two Healing Waters Outings

by Jim McRoberts

On May 9th (a beautiful day), we had an outing for the Seattle vets. These six were all from the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder unit, PTSD. Project Healing Waters (PHW) headquarters agreed to pay for us to take the veterans ranging in age from 60+ (Viet Nam) to mid 20’s (current wars) to Trophy Lake near Port Orchard. The manager and staff at Trophy Lake made certain we had all the help we needed to have a great day and we did! Trophy Lake has six rods, which we used even though we had several of our own and the ones belonging to PHW. They gave us a cart with four seats and a luggage area. We fished two hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. We fished the lower

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The Effects of Project Healing Waters

pond in the morning. Then they provided a sit-down-select-anything from the menu lunch. In the afternoon we went to the upper pond. There were more active fish in this one and they were closer to shore. Everyone caught fish, some on the flies they tied themselves! Flies used were woolly buggers, chironomids, mayfly, and other emergers and comparadun.

Thanks to the PHW volunteers Vicki Hoagland, **Chuck Ballard**, Chuck Tye (NW Coordinator for PHW), Frank Yandrasits, Paul Dieter, and **Jim McRoberts**. We also had two therapists from the Seattle VAMC PTSD unit (Michael Schillo and Todd Thomas), who drove the vets to the lake.

On May 30th PHW had another outing. It was a gorgeous spring day to fish with four in-patients and one VA staff member, Michael Schillo, from Seattle VAMC, and two wounded warriors from Ft. Lewis at Trophy Lake Golf and Casting. While everyone got into fish, not all were brought to hand, but the cries of “fish on!” and the bend of the rod were enough to satisfy everyone! I loved the fact that one volunteer member noticed that all the volunteers pretty much “squealed like girls” whenever a fish was on the end of the line!

Again many thanks to PHW volunteers **Chuck Ballard**, **Dick Stearns** and his brother-in-law, **Don Schroeder**, **Jim Higgins**, Paul Dieter, Larry Clemons, and Vicki Hoagland for making this day memorable. The recreational therapists at the Seattle VA have let us know what a positive impact we have had on our vets and wounded warriors, and the volunteers always leave with big smiles!

Book Review by Steve Raymond

"If Fish Could Scream: An Angler's Search for the Future of Fly Fishing"

by Paul Schullery
Stackpole, \$24.95

Paul Schullery is the leading fly-fishing historian of his generation, with many thoughtful and intelligent books to his credit. In this new one he brings a historian's long view to bear on some of the most contentious issues facing anglers today, including the ethics of fishing contests and the pros and cons of catch-and-release fishing.

Schullery also probes deeply into the culture of fly fishing, examining the cult of the fly-fishing celebrity, the rivalry between fly fishers and spin fishers, the impacts of transportation on fishing, the good and bad effects of dams, and fisheries management policies in our national parks. In each case, he frames the issue in its historical context, quoting works dating back as far as the 16th century, then assesses where we are today and where we may be headed next—for fly fishing, he says, “is poised for continuing and probably accelerated change.”

Readers who keep waiting for Schullery to take positions on some of these controversial matters will be disappointed. When he does take a position, which he does infrequently, it's almost always squarely in the middle instead of on one side or the other. But eventually it becomes clear this book is not about the author taking positions; it's about making *readers* think about and perhaps re-evaluate their own positions. In that, it's admirably successful.

“If Fish Could Scream” is an interesting and provocative book. It won't teach you to catch more fish or tie better flies, but it might help you become a more thoughtful angler. Not many books can do that.



Washington Fly Fishing Club
P.O. Box 639
Mercer Island, WA 98040
www.wffc.com

Stamp
here

June, 2009

Meeting Announcement



Meetings are held on the third Tuesday 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: Significant Others Outing on Wed., June 17th

Bring your significant other to an extraordinary meal by renowned chef Tom Douglas.