

Creel Notes from the



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



July, 2011



President's Riffle

I took a drive last week up to the Skykomish River just to be around a river. It's mid-summer, and under usual conditions I would be river fishing for summer steelhead by now. But I knew the rivers were still up ... a massive snowpack, with a late arriving snowmelt, makes for a late summer season. The Sky was indeed up, but I had no idea it would be up in the trees. I had driven up to Reiter Ponds above Gold Bar to see if any fish had been taken. The report was that a dozen or so steelhead were caught that day, most in the early morning. Now, at least, my mind is in summer steelhead mode. I think I will try to hit the North Fork of the Stilly one day after work next week. I work at Boeing Everett, so it should be rather doable.

I wonder how many of our WFFC members really understand the importance of the history and heritage of our club? Did you know that the North Fork of the Stillaguamish was the first steelhead stream in the country to be designated as fly-fishing only? Further, did you know that our club, the Washington Fly Fishing Club, was THE club responsible for securing those rules? The early members of our club back in the early days were a "who's who" list of Northwest Fly Fishermen ... **Enos Bradner, Sandy Bacon, Ralph Wahl, Walt Johnson, and Frank Headrick**. They were a group known for getting things done. I realize times were different back then. But this was a group that did not take "No" for an answer.

Frank Headrick was 103 years old when we lost him last week. He was a true icon in my eyes, and I am proud to have met him. He was one of those who was instrumental in getting the Stilly fly-fishing only. I thank him and the others for doing that, as we all should. He joined the WFFC in 1940. He "retired" six steelhead rods, at 100 steelhead per rod ... over 600 steelhead

landed! I saw him at one of our club meetings (last year, I believe). He was of sound mind and body. I can't help but think that his life of fishing and the outdoors helped him to be robust and strong well past 100. The correlation screams at you – live long and strong, go fishing. Next time you are on the North Fork of the Stilly, be sure to pack a flask and raise a toast to Frank and the others, and say, "Thank you."

Rocco Maccarrone



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Monthly Meeting, Tues., July 19th. Dec Hogan presents **Steelhead Fishing**

Leech Lake Outing, Sat., July 16th, and Sun., 17th

Scottish Lakes Outing, Sat., August 20th, and Sun., 21st

Leech Lake Outing, July 16th, 17th 2011 by Dave Schorsch

We are returning to Leech Lake on July 16th and 17th to chase brookies and eat steaks.

The outing went so well last year that we're gonna do it again, except a little earlier. Same social plan, with Saturday happy hour around 5:00, and dinner to follow. The club will provide steaks and beverages, you bring side dishes and appetizers. Pancake breakfast Sunday morning! Just bring your appetite! (Set up and cleanup volunteers always appreciated.)

The nice folks at White Pass Village Inn (509-672-3131) have lots of rooms available, and are really looking forward to our group showing up. Said it was the best time they had last year! We'll be setting up barbeques and canopies on their lawns. They have several different layouts available to sleep lots of people, and sharing the condos is really quite inexpensive. Four of us shared a "standard" loft condo last year (and hosted the breakfast there) for 28.00 apiece.

For those of you who prefer camping, there are some nice campsites around the lake, available on a first-come basis. They fill up, so get there early.

The fishing is pretty easy, with dry lines fishing most of this shallow lake well. Small bead-heads and long leaders work, but I prefer dry flies. The brookies look up a lot, even when there is no obvious hatch going on. There are some nice rainbows in the lake (triploids?), which will be the biggest in your catch for sure. Most of the brookies are pan size, and really pretty.

As of June 12th, the lake was open (no ice), but there was still a foot of snow in the campground. Should be all warmed up for us by the time we arrive.

This is a beautiful trip, driving through Mt. Rainier National Park, with mountain passes in full bloom. Less than a hundred miles from Seattle! So come join us! Make sure to sign up on the web site for an accurate dinner and breakfast count.

See you there! Dave Schorsch 206-227-6134

Creel Notes

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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.

Rocco Maccarrone introduced himself to thunderous applause and got right to work with guest introductions and other early business. He substituted fishing reports with fishing stories and that got **Gil** up and on the mic speaking in bad English mixed with a Swedish accent that led to screwing. Go figure. The rest of the stories do not bear repeating.

Announcements started with a discussion on whether or not river anglers in water craft have to wear a life vest. The jury is out on this question. Otherwise, the Jimmy Green Conclave is cancelled; the WDFW is looking into managing the Wind River as a wild fish only river; get your best flies to Gil so he can put together some great collections for the Christmas party; get your donations to **Mike Santangelo** as well as photos for the slide show; and Rocco showed off the cool little raffle rod that members who bring a guest will be eligible for later in the year.

Mike Wearne brought us up to date on the High Lakes trip this August 20th and 21st to Scottish Lakes. Guests get hauled up in an SUV and then assigned to a cabin. Give him an email to make sure there's room for you and yours. Women and children are welcome.

I can report for those of you unfortunate enough not to attend that the views over the lake were crystal clear spectacular, Mt. Rainier was in full view, the BBQ "grilled pork chop with apple brandy sauce" and mash potatoes was scrumptious, and the conversation uplifting. The chit chat ranged from gambling in Monaco to \$5 million sail boats to club racing Ferraris to the tragedy of teacher's pensions and how evil public servants are keeping the economy from recovery (present company excluded, naturally).

With a full eye to innovation, Rocco split up the raffle into three places, with the table dwindling at each juncture. From this heart-splitting excitement, we moved to the induction of **Mike Hurt**, just back from the gambling tables of Monaco. Gil reminded the membership that we ain't getting any younger, but for his inductions, the heart of the club would stop beating. With that in mind, he reminded Mike that there's work to be done and flies to be tied, but just in case he didn't know better, Gil gave him the

only flies worth fishing with and you know what those are.

Mike Wearne yielded the mic to **Chapin Henry** to introduce his former guide on the Methow, Johnny Boitano from Troutwater Fly Shop, to talk about the same. He is part owner of the fly shop that has locations in Ellensburg and Cle Elum (www.troutwaterfly.com). Tonight, Johnny featured his extensive background on the Methow. He reminded members to check the rules before stringing your rod because things change from season to season, bridge to bridge.

In general, he divides the river between the upper section to Carlton and from there to the Pateros confluence on the Columbia. The upper section is calmer with easier wading while the lower section is bigger water with boulders and more rapids to challenge the boater (up to class 3-4 in higher water, class 2 in normal flow).

Johnny invited questions during his talk. If he'd known how members like to hear their own voices he might of thought otherwise, so he struggled to get from point A to B. He picked up on the vociferousness and sped up his talk. He likes water levels for floating above 1000 cfs and wading below that number. Johnny considers the river "blown" above 6000 cfs. If temperatures start to warm up, look for moving oxygenated water, and catch and release quickly. If things fall below 400 cfs, the floating below Twisp gets really slow and you'd better cherry-pick your water. But the water below Carlton starts to get better in low water, as fish seek out deep, fast pools. For self-guided pontoon anglers, the fly shop at Carlton will arrange shuttles with a little warning.

Trout are the summer quarry. Fish pocket water with big attractors and look for good-sized rainbows and cutbows. Rather than fish the soft inside water, since the big fish are looking for oxygen and living in the white water, fish those small flat sections just before a whitecap.

Hoppers, big attractors, and Chernobyl ants are favorites. They nymph under duress or if their clients want to catch lots of fish in a hurry, and use the usual suspects (pheasant tails, hare's ears).

Trout season morphs nicely into steelhead season and often you don't know what you got until the rod bends (and bends) to the typical 6-9 lbs. summer run (15 lbs are known). If it's a wild fish, keep it in the water during release. If's its clipped, handle without

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care, catch and keep, and throw it away if you don't take it home for the grill. The steelhead migrate up and down the system in October, so don't worry about following the run. Early in the season, if the water temperatures are up, look in heavier water than you would assume. By October, in prime season, fish are in all sorts of water. Johnny prefers egg patterns, stoneflies, and caddis nymphs. They are in the water for a long time, so the steelhead eat like a trout. Leave the super secret flies at home and bring the standards.

From there Johnny went into steelhead management theory. The current theory believes that the hatchery fish help the wild steelies migrate under the theory that good numbers of fish migrating down the river help with predation. When they return, however, they want anglers to keep clipped steelhead and remove the hatchery fish from the breeding pool. The longer anglers stick to the clipped fish and don't kill the wild guys, the longer the season goes.

Bull Trout are on the increase and will chase your swinging flies. Release them quickly.

Camping is available up and down the system, starting with tent camping in Pateros to various commercial sites with tent sites and RV hook ups. Free pull-ins exist as well, but are few and far between above Winthrop until you get into the wild country.

We enjoyed committee reports and fishing reports. **Pete Crumbaker** hit the beaches near Gig Harbor for sea-run cutthroat. Not much to report, but Pete's were bigger. We heard about some good fishing in Arkansas, in between tornado warnings and flood warnings; muddy water in New Mexico; tough conditions below the dam on the Missouri in Montana; and an exceptional week on Chopaka, Eliguk, and Corbett lakes. The moral of the latter is, the more private and remote, the more fish you caught.



Eliguk Lake, BC 6/2011 by Bob Young

It was a hell of a trip! In this instance, meaning of course, a terrific outing. The annual trip to Eliguk Lake, located in central British Columbia, took place in mid June. At one time this was a very popular destination for members of the WFFC, but interest seems to have waned in recent years. Members on this year's trip included long-time participants **Gil Nyerges, Perry Barth, Hugh Jennings, and Chuck Ballard**. Gil is probably the senior man among this lot as I think next year will be his 30th. Others in our group included **Ron Pera**, myself, and John Stachurski, who is Chuck Ballard's fishing buddy.

Let me set the stage for fishing at Eliguk. The lake is remote, accessible by float plane or quad ATV. Besides the lodge and its attendant cabins, there are only three other structures on the lake. One is a small cabin about 1/4 mile from the lodge and two other cabins about two miles down and across the lake. The week we were there, the nearby cabin was occupied for two days. There were some people in the down-lake cabins, but we only saw one of their boats on one occasion, so we had the lake pretty much to ourselves. The lake is about a mile wide and three miles long, completely surrounded by dense



Ron Pera, Hugh Jennings, and Bob Young at Eliguk



In the lodge at Eliguk

forest. This is wilderness. There are eagles, ospreys, loons, and the occasional moose sighting.

Fishing is done from 12' aluminum boats with six-horse outboards, two to a boat. Life jackets, anchors, and nets are provided, as well as a pan for the fish you wish to keep. Jonathan, who operates the place, cleans, smokes, and vacuum packs your fish, which allows us to bring home ten nice smoked trout each.

Your day might go something like this: Rise at 4:30 and row out a few feet and start fishing. The only noise you will hear are some loons calling to each other. Actually it is so quiet that you can hear the fuel gauge in the gas can clicking. Breakfast is served around seven. After breakfast you can have an extra cup of coffee and leisurely round up your gear, including rain wear, for the day's action. As usual on most lakes, the fish don't get very active until about 9:30 or 10:00. Lunch is ready between 12 and 1, and then it's time for a nap or the afternoon bite, which usually goes on till about 4:30 or 5:00. You might get off the water earlier if the wind comes up. So now you clean up and head into the lodge for a cocktail and storytelling. After dinner there is plenty of time to fish as it doesn't get dark until about 10:45. Actually no one went out after dinner as there was enough good fishing during the day.

A general description of the weather would be "variable". A couple of mornings it was about 32 degrees, and there was ice on the boat seats, but other days it would start out in the 40's and usually got up into the 50's. One day the sun came out and we all got pretty warm until we shucked our rain

gear. The rain, when there was any, was pretty light. No big wind storms or thunder and lightning this year, but a couple of times the wind did make it uncomfortable. Well, how about the fishing? The fishing (and catching) was very good. The lake is chock full of Kamloops trout, the number of which is hard to imagine. This year the fish ranged in size from 13 to 18 inches, with most in the 14-15 inch range.

Perry Barth had this to say: Catching was great and we ended up with a fun group and a wonderful week. I put on a "Skinney Minnie" to start with the first day. Since it was one of **Andy Hall's** favorite patterns, I told him at our last visit that I would catch the first fish with that fly, hold it up and say, "This one's for you, Andy", since he is unable to go with us anymore. That first fish was about 15" and off the dock while I waited for my partner. Gil saw it and will attest to my figure. I didn't change to a new fly for two days. "If it's not broken, don't fix it", eh? Other patterns that worked well for me were Squirrel Zonker, Gil's Monster, Woolly Bugger, and "Nigerian Nymph"! Dry flies—and we had lots of good times with them—were Parachute Adams and Royal Wulff.

As far as the number of fish went, I would say everyone averaged 50 fish a day and most of the angling took place in just the three bays at the west end of the lake. Many of the usual lake patterns worked, and I might add "especially the Nyerges Nymph and something called a Gil's Monster." I fished a self-bodied Carey Special until it was just some black thread and a few barbules. There was quite a bit of surface or just subsurface feeding, mostly I would say on midges (chironomids).

Often anything sitting on top of the water would induce a take, many of which were so subtle that if you didn't have your eye on your fly, you would miss it. There were a few mayflies hatching, but the fish pretty much ignored the adults, but would take a cripple. When the top-water feeding slacked off, switching to a sink tip or intermediate line would get you into some fish.

As I mentioned, this is wild country. Hugh and Ron, both birders, took some time to go in search of some elusive species. Hugh got a little too intimate with a loon. Here is his story: "I cast a wet fly, probably a Gil's Monster, out and was stripping it in when a fish got hooked. I started stripping line in when it started heading for the bottom of the lake. I put all the pressure my rod could stand to try and

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stop the run. Finally, I was able to start retrieving some line when a loon showed up about 20-30 ft. away with my fish in its bill and the hook still attached to the fish. I put more pressure on the fish and was able to pull it out of the loon's bill. I kept stripping as fast as I could with the loon chasing it and opening its bill and trying to close it on the fish. I won the battle and got the fish in and retrieved my fly. The fish was pretty much dead so I threw it back in the water and the loon got it. This was only the best of the three fish I lost to loons.”

I didn't have any run-ins with loons, but did notice many fish had missing scales from loon attacks.

Chuck brought along a video camera, so some action footage should show up somewhere. On the morning of our scheduled departure, the weather closed in and the ceiling was only a couple hundred feet. It eventually cleared some and the Beaver made it in for the first load. We took a somewhat circuitous route on the way out clearing the tree tops by only a few feet.

I'm sure most of us have a checklist for preparing and packing for a trip like this, but someone didn't check his very well. There was an issue with a passport, reels that weren't where they should have been, and NO FLY BOXES. But none of this had much of an impact and this turned out to be a great trip for everybody.

Fish Lake, June 18, 2011 by Dave Schorsch

Our second “day trip” outing this year was to Fish Lake, a large resort lake that sits just east of Stevens pass.

Seven club members met at the Cove resort, to launch an assault on the weedy west end of the lake. As usual, timing is everything, so of course we picked the same day as the local T.U. chapter's annual take-a-kid fishing derby. We worked our way through the armada of party barges and tin boats with smoking motors, trying to miss the bobbers and flying buzz bombs in front of the resort.

Once around the point, we pretty much had it to ourselves, with probably three quarters of a mile of shoreline coves and weeds. The wind blew pretty steady, so there was no hatch visible, although fish were splashing around all day. We were accompanied by as many as eight ospreys at once, along with bald eagles and herons, to give you an idea of the fish biomass here. The lake is full of fish, with the trout grabbing stuff near the top, and perch and bass swallowing your flies if they sank even three feet. Pretty much anything worked, as long as it was on an intermediate type line. **Mark Pratt** hammered a couple dozen trout on his red bead-head green thing; **Callahan** caught lots on a brass bead-head green thing; I caught lots on an oversized damsel-type green thing.... etc., etc., etc. Anything green. The trout ran from 10 to 15 inches for the most part, with the fry stock fish being stronger and brighter for their size.

The lake is well known for the monster browns that eat everyone else in there, so you have to try for them at least a little. I fished three- to four-inch olive clousers with trailing hooks on heavy leaders, only to have two of them ripped off my leader. No yellow perch there! I'll be going back with heavier stuff, to throw at the big swirls we all saw along the undercuts and lily pads.

We wrapped the day up with a burger at the local watering hole, and headed home. Had some fun, caught lots of fish, didn't spend much time or money, spent time with our friends. A really good day.

Frank Headrick, 1908-2011

by Steve Raymond

Frank Headrick, a Bellingham native and a stonemason by trade, started fly fishing in 1938. Two years later he found his way to Dawn Holbrook's tackle shop on Broadway in Seattle, where he learned about the Washington Fly Fishing Club, then only a year old. Sponsored by Holbrook, Frank became a member of the club and soon became fast friends with **Enos Bradner**, the club's charter president. The two began making trips to the Wind River in Southwest Washington, where they scrambled down into a steep canyon to a place they called "the Rock Pool", where they caught many summer steelhead. They also were among the "gang" of fly fishers who sought steelhead in the North Fork of the Stillaguamish, and joined other early WFFC members to carry out a controversial but successful campaign to have the North Fork designated the first-ever fly-fishing-only summer steelhead river.



Frank became WFFC president in 1942, the first member to serve two terms in that position. Although primarily a steelhead fisherman, he also enjoyed fishing the state's lowland lakes, and it was on one of these, Price Lake in Mason County, where Frank and Bradner together developed the fly pattern known as the Dandy Green Nymph, which remains in use to this day.

Shortly after World War II, when a farmer on the North Fork subdivided his property downstream from Deer Creek, Frank was among several WFFC members who bought lots on the river near the famous Elbow Hole. At the time his friend Bradner was covering atomic tests at Bikini Atoll for the *Seattle Times*, so Frank bought the lot next door and held it for Bradner, who in turn purchased it in partnership with **Sandy Bacon**, another WFFC member. Headrick, Bradner, **Ken McLeod**, **Walt Johnson**, and other WFFC members also soon became involved with the state Game Department trapping steelhead returning to Deer Creek, and reared their

offspring in a hatchery, the first time this ever had been done successfully with summer steelhead. For his work on this and other projects, Frank received the WFFC's Empty Creel Award in 1947.

Frank's experience fishing the North Fork also led him to devise several fly patterns, notably Headrick's Hellcat and the Haille Selassie. He remained a familiar figure on the river for many years, retiring six fly rods after catching 100 steelhead on each one, but advancing age finally took its toll and he sold his lot and cabin to his son, Bob, who now occupies a home he built on the site. Frank and Bob also were regular attendees at the WFFC's annual Pass Lake Opening Day outings, where they always prepared a fine table with checkered cloth and lighted candles.

As years passed and the founding members of the WFFC left us one by one, Frank eventually became the club's oldest surviving member. Fortunately, many of his experiences were recorded in an oral history interview in 2005, and the transcript is now available on line in the Fly Fishing Collection on the Western Washington University library's website. In 2008, the club held a party to celebrate Frank's 100th birthday, and Frank and members of his family listened while club old-timers told some hilarious Headrick tales, prompting Frank to respond that "some of these lies are even true stories."

Since passing the century mark, Frank attended only occasional WFFC meetings, usually in company with his friend **Perry Barth**. In March of this year, Perry, **Gil Nyerges**, and several other WFFC members gathered for a quiet celebration of Frank's 103rd birthday.

On the morning of Friday, July 1, Frank had just finished breakfast and settled into a living-room chair when he passed away in the space of a moment. It had been his wish to die at home.

Preceded in death by his wife and his son, Jim, Frank is survived by his other son, Bob; a daughter, Lita; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A private memorial service is planned by the family, and Frank's ashes will be divided between the Palouse, where he hunted game birds for many years, and the North Fork, where his remains will join those of his old friend Bradner.

Frank Headrick's record of 71 years as a member of the Washington Fly Fishing Club may never be surpassed. He will be forever missed.



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Stamp
here

July, 2011

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:

Dec Hogan presents **Steelhead Fishing.**