

**Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast**

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 7<sup>th</sup> –January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**Fisheries Update:** Whether you are drift fishing, bobber fishing or wondering which river on the North Coast to fish, our series of technical reports will up your odds of a successful fishing trip. All you have to do is log on and pick which ones will help you catch more fish! These reports and several more are available at: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/techrpt.shtml>.

Last week, we shared this with paid subscribers and felt the information too valuable not to include it for all readers here, particularly with the freezing weather overnight this week and the possibility of snow upcoming. Road conditions may be checked by telephone for free at any hour of the day. **Dial 511** for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) TripCheck Traveler Information Line.

Coastal rivers are low, clear and cold, but forecasts indicate improvement with precipitation over the weekend. Combined with extreme tides, steelhead will be available in the Nehalem, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

The Siletz has been slow, but rivers further South on the coast are productive. Good results have come to anglers on the Umpqua, Coquille, Sixes and Rogue Rivers.

Clackamas steelheaders have had a tough time finding any fish over the last weekend. Prospects were slightly better on the Sandy.

Water temperatures dipped to 35 degrees at the Falls as visibility increased to nearly five feet. Rain will improve conditions here. Sturgeon fishermen are seeing negligible returns on their time. Plunkers in the power Willamette have managed to bank the occasional steelhead.

Steelhead fishing has improved dramatically with a warming trend on the Grand Ronde River in Eastern Oregon.

Sturgeon fishing on the Columbia is very slow but is expected to improve in the weeks to come.

Crabbing and clamming are good alternatives or additions to fishing this weekend.

Trout stocking will once again commence the second week in January according to the ODFW.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Sturgeon fishing is at a near standstill. Shakers remain willing but fish over 30 inches are scarce. Anywhere. The only legal fish reported by ODFW checkers over the weekend was of seven taken by the 48 rods trying in the gorge.

There's hope for improvement with the smelt run over the horizon, but that's an event unlikely to occur until early February.

A very few keepers have come out of Multnomah Channel and below the mouth of the Willamette over the last week. The stretch of the Columbia from Horsetail Falls to St. Helens got a little attention from hopefuls who found little to show for their efforts.

The best bet to take home enough seafood to feed the family is to drop crab pots or rings in the Columbia estuary in the Buoy 20 to 22 stretch. See the Columbia Forecast, below, for more.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The tides may improve prospect for sturgeon, although delays in timing on the river will put the best outgoing too late in the day for improved current. With the water frigid and the smelt run weeks away, there's no real indication of any influence to turn around this lackluster fishery. It really will get better in early February.

This is the last weekend for truly fabulous crabbing for a while, but crabbers need to plan around big tides. Think early morning, but check the wind and weather conditions. Crabbing results from the Columbia estuary will remain good, at least until commercial effort starts up on January 15th. Those huge pots will be placed in the water as early as the 12th, however, which will start a process of thinning the numbers available to sport crabbers.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – There's not much news at Willamette Falls with the last data available is as of December 31st, 2004, when daily counts were reliably in the low double digits. The total winter steelhead count was 539. Current data indicates the water temperature has fallen to a chilly 35 degrees while the visibility has increased to nearly five feet. Come on, rain!

Sturgeon fishing has not improved.

For additional information on the lower Willamette, see Ken Johnson's report on the Meldrum Bar area in 'Reader Mail' below.

Catch-and-release fishing in the North Santiam for large, native steelhead won't be worthwhile until mid-February or so.

**The Guide's Forecast** – It looks like the plunkers have the right idea. The area below the mouth of the Clackamas River seems to hold the best prospects for intercepting a winter steelhead.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas River steelheaders took a few over the last week. Diver and bait along with trolled plugs were as effective as anything. The water looks good but seems nearly devoid of steelhead and none have been seen as yet in the hatchery trap at Eagle Creek.

The Sandy River has the low and clear blues, although a few very persistent steelhead anglers have managed to hook a few.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Steelheading on the Clack has been so slow that it would be overly optimistic to think it would improve dramatically by the weekend ... even with a little rain. Check back next week for an update.

This week, between the two, the Sandy gets the nod as offering better prospects for success. Steelhead have entered the hatchery here, unlike the Clackamas. If rain does fall, so much the better. Anglers may expect to encounter a mix of hatchery and wild fish.

ODFW sez: "There is a regulation change for the Sandy River prohibiting angling from a floating device upstream from 200 feet below the Oxbow Park boat ramp." Good thing there's a sign.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Cold, clear weather and cold, clear water is the rule. Anglers, readers and those of us who relay the information are all weary of low water reports but that's been the rule with unusually dry weather.

Just as the best fishermen follow the fish as seasons dictate, those with a hankering for seafood will do well to change tactics in order to take advantage of other quarry. Tasty crustaceans are abundant and readily available.

One of the (few) advantages of unseasonably low rainfall is high salinity levels in Oregon Bays and estuaries, creating desirable environs for Dungeness. These delectable creatures are in prime physical condition now.

Reports from crabbers working Nehalem Bay have been very good. Tillamook, Netarts, Yaquina, Waldport and most bays South of that point are putting out worthwhile catches.

Speaking of catches, the extreme tidal series starting up this week will be a hindrance to crabbers who will be challenged by heavier than normal flows. Plan morning trips to catch the incoming and keep an eye on floats.

Leaving them untended when highs are forecast between nine and 10 feet may result in floats ending up underwater and difficult to find, let alone pull.

The flip side of this circumstance is stellar clam tides in late afternoon and early

evening.

Those willing to devote a road trip to procuring razor clams, arguably the most tasty of bivalves, may wish to make plans to ply the ocean beaches in Washington State. The WDFW recently announced the first of only a few openings for razors at the productive Northern beaches which offer good numbers and usually larger specimens than Oregon locations.

"Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks beaches will all be open to razor clam digging between noon and midnight Jan. 7, 8 and 9" according to a recent Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife bulletin. Three days may also be allowed in February and March contingent upon the results of toxin tests.

A call to the Oregon Department of Agriculture shellfish hotline (1-800-448-2474) the morning of Wednesday, January 5th, revealed that the razor clam closure from Reedsport to Charleston has been lifted. Clatsop beaches remain open but Newport to Gold Beach is closed due to high levels of domoic acid, a naturally-occurring marine toxin. Bay clams are not affected.

Those trying for razors anywhere on ocean beaches should exercise extreme caution, particularly after dark. It's easy for waves to sneak up in low light.

Despite advice to the contrary, hard-core anglers will want to fish this weekend. Reports are thin but here's a rundown of what's been happening and where one might expect the best results.

This Email from **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-335-3849)** pretty much sums it up: "The report from the north coast is....very low water, very few fish. Most boats are lucky to get one fish per day. Of the relatively low catch rate, most fish are turning out to be wild and or wild broodstock in the case of the Wilson river. We need rain badly."

That said, the mainstem Nehalem has produced a few steelies, but the majority here are also natives which must be released.

The Wilson dropped 10 inches this week to summer levels and clarity. A handful of steelhead have been taken in spite of the conditions. Chinook fishing was better than steelheading in the Wilson through December, but the season closed on the 1st of January.

Steelhead entering the Nestucca are a combination of hatchery and broodstock fish. Fewer than 300 have entered the hatchery at Cedar Creek although some will return to the area where originally planted above 5th Bridge. It's been very slow.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Angler's success over the coming week will be partially

contingent upon whether or not the precipitation much of which is forecast to fall as snow on the coast, is sufficient to positively impact the river level and flow. Coastal steelhead will fulfill an urge to enter the rivers during the extreme flood tides occurring over the next several days, creating windows of opportunity but nothing compared to the bonanza which will follow a good, heavy rain.

Those who try the challenging steelhead fishery (over the easier quarry like Dungeness or razor clams) in low water conditions have the best chance of success at first light. Following sunrise and during daylight hours, anglers targeting steelhead will do well to concentrate on fast, broken water which fish will seek for marginal cover in low, clear water conditions. Natural presentation of bobber and jigs or drifting small baits of quality cured eggs or sand shrimp tail will be most likely to tempt spooky metalheads in these conditions. Be sure to drop us a line to let us know how you do!

If the weather forecast holds true, things look bright for the weekend fishery. Be careful on the roads if the snow forecast actually comes to pass.

The Wilson will get additional steelhead with tides and rain. It will be more fun, though, if there is a better mix of hatchery broodstock in the next round.

The Nestucca fishes best between five and six feet, and if the NOAA forecast holds true, the level at Beaver will go over five feet on Friday morning. Steelhead are due and will enter in good number if the level comes up during the extreme tidal series.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Siletz steelheaders are seeing little results for their efforts although some nice sea-run cutthroat trout have been taken in the process.

Many streams and rivers on the South Coast have remained productive with recent reports of a few winters topping 20 pounds.

Wild steelhead may be retained from the mainstem of the Umpqua River as of January 1st, but most anglers continue to practice the catch-and-release ethic. A steelie of nearly 21 pounds came from the South Fork this week and a few hatchery fish are being taken on the North Fork near Elkton.

Steelheading on the Coquille River has held up fairly well. The Elk and Sixes, productive for chinook into the weekend, have slowed with the lower water levels as winter steelheading has started to improve.

Chetco River steelheaders report very good results recently for fish averaging 10 pounds. Cured salmon eggs are taking the majority of fish here.

Winter steelhead in the hot ticket on the Rogue River where fishing continues to improve. With the majority of this run of native origin, anglers are allowed to keep a

wild fish in anywhere downstream of Hog Creek up to five in a year. Agness is the hotspot with both boat and bank fishers doing well.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – An improvement in conditions and catch rates on the Grand Ronde River is refreshing in this report from **Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** who writes, "Late December gave steelhead anglers a daunting array of water conditions to deal with as they closed out the year. The general progression was cooling weather and progressively more ice in the rivers and tributaries.

"For bobber anglers the difficult conditions seemed to have little effect, but for drift fishermen and fly fishermen, the conditions became nearly impossible. By Wednesday the weather had abruptly warmed and most major streams cleared of ice. One exception was the Minam River that continued emptying ice bergs into the Wallowa River at Minam, but even that ice had disappeared within a mile.

"The water warmed from freezing to upper 30s and lower 40s overnight and invigorated steelhead holding throughout the system. The results were dramatic and Oregon anglers, that reported an average of 27 hours per fish the week before, were now averaging a fish every four hours.

"Washington anglers showed little change during the entire sequence and averaged near five hours per fish for the entire two weeks.

"Troy Shilo Oasis is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. Boggan's Oasis is open Wednesday through Monday from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Earlier food service and shuttles are available at Boggan's by appointment by calling 509-256-3372."

**Pro guide Blake Payne (208-476-7698)** shares this information from father East, "We saw some rain last week which was predicted. the fishing continues to be really good. for a full report on Idaho's famous Clearwater Steelhead check this issue of salmon steelhead journal. Pat Hoglund and myself fished for 2 days and I think Pat was quite impressed with what he found."

**Northwest Trout** - The ODFW indicates that trout stocking in the lakes on the North coast will commence the second week of January. They also indicate that no stocking will take place in the Willamette Zone and that Walter Wirth will be stocked this week, so we're guessing they either will or they won't.

### **Reader Email**

Regular contributor and **avid angler Ken Johnson** reports in his singular style, "THE FISHING IS ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC at Meldrum Bar ("The Bar) this past week and no one is complaining at all.....About the weather that is. Unfortunately, the catchin' has been a bit on the shy side of GREAT. About 4-6 Steelies are being

brought to the bank, every day. That's GREAT for those who hook into them! There's probably 2-3 Iron Heads caught in different areas around "The Bar," but I can't be everywhere, every day! "The Bulkhead" had about 10 fishermen there today but I didn't get any word on how they were doing. We heard from "The Point" that a couple of fish were caught up there today. There are about 20-40 poles in the river, every day, from just upriver from the boat ramp all the way down to "The Point." 2-3 fish caught and, well, you can do the math! The fish are there, but the water is way, way low. And "Gin Clear" too. That might be good on the Clackamas or Sandy rivers but as we all know, more fish are caught when the water has a little color to it than not. And, as far as the Willamette River is concerned, more fish are caught when the water level is 2-3 feet higher than it is right now with a bit more water flow! Last Sunday, the 2d, Kurt (?) hooked into 4 (FOUR!!!) Steelies all by himself. I think this a little on the "Lucky" side of things. Oh, I'm not saying Kurt is a lousy fisherman or anything close, quite the contrary...But come on. I mean, a lot of the guys are using *almost the exact same rigs* as Kurt is using, but Kurt hooks FOUR!? Come Onnnnnnnnn....I hear he got *his* limit and passed his pole to others as the fish kept biting. So, there were 4 Metal Heads taken home that day. Thanks Kurt! At "The Point," which is where Kurt was fishing, there have been about 2-3 fish caught just about every day. Today (Thursday the 5th) 3 fish were brought to the beach there. "Garage Door Tony" says that that this year, so far it is unusually slow. 'GDT' is a regular at Meldrum Bar. One of the original "Beach Maggot!" and he'll tell you so. His words today were "It sure isn't like our usual 15-25 fish days here at "The Point" compared to this same time last year...!" 15-25 Fish Days??? Come Onnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn...Sounds like a fish story...But it's a true fish story. I've been there! Don't tell anyone though...It's a secret fishing hole...There at "The Point!"

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [drees@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:drees@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com)

### **Random Links**

Article on Solunar Tables from ESPN makes for interesting winter reading for believer and naysayer alike:

\*[http://espn.go.com/outdoors/tips/s/f\\_fea\\_04\\_moon\\_phases\\_FHN.html](http://espn.go.com/outdoors/tips/s/f_fea_04_moon_phases_FHN.html)

Kids with shellfish tags means an extra limit, I'm told. Hammond crabbing success photo from KATU: \*[http://www.katu.com/features/fishtales/ft\\_05\\_01\\_03.asp](http://www.katu.com/features/fishtales/ft_05_01_03.asp)

**Weekly Quote** - "I never lost a little fish - Yes, I'm free to say. It always was the biggest fish I caught, that got away." - Eugene Field

**GOOD LUCK!**