

The Guide's Forecast - volume 6 issue number 31

Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 4th – February 10th, 2005**

Fisheries Update: Whether you are driftfishing, bobberfishing 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>.

My boat is for sale! This is an excellent craft for an excellent price! It comes with the extras you want it to (for a price of course) but the boat is listed at \$19,000.00 for an awesome outfit. I may even teach you how to fish out of it! Just look at my ad (it's the first boat listed) by clicking over to:
<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/boatads.shtml>. The kicker motor is a 2003, not a 2001 model like the ad suggests.

Those of us to whom falls the task of documenting the angling experience have a tough job when the fishing is poor. It's no surprise that we get little sympathy from our fellow fishermen.

Its a good thing, however, that Punxsutawney Phil (<http://www.punxsutawneyphil.com/>) saw his shadow the morning of Groundhog Day. Six more weeks of winter along with accompanying lowland rain and Cascade snow is necessary to improve the outlook for Oregon streams, rivers and lakes. Unfortunately, there's little hope for precipitation in the weather forecasts.

Crummy conditions equals lousy results. Still, we fish.

Sturgeon fishing remain very poor on the Columbia with exception to a few willing pockets of biters above Bonneville Dam. Maybe with the warmer weather, the upcoming smelt run may stimulate migration!

Salmon success on the mainstem is poor despite early, motivated anglers! Sea-lions however are taking red-meated fish at Bonneville- likely steelhead.

Good clam tides this weekend on North Coast beaches and estuaries. Be prepared with lanterns as the tides occur late in the afternoon. Clatsop County beaches for razor clams and Tillamook County estuaries for chowder clams! Great sturgeon tides this weekend also for Tillamook Bay anglers. View our full length version for the best areas!

Steelheading on the North Coast is poor and should remain so through the weekend. I don't need to tell anyone how much precipitation we need around here. Returning numbers to north coast hatcheries are down between 30 and 60 percent!

Crabbing shouldn't be all that good on north coast estuaries this weekend with the extreme tides we will be experiencing.

Steelheading is holding up well on the South Fork Coquille and fish continue to be taken on the main stem Umpqua although rain would improve prospects.

Until rain changes the conditions, there's not much happening on the spring chinook or steelhead front on the lower Willamette. A few optimistic trollers are working the area below the I-205 Bridge but are rarely seeing fish. Sturgeon fishing is poor.

Broodstock steelhead are expected on the Clackamas and Sandy but as with most rivers and streams around Oregon, these would benefit from some precipitation.

No trout were stocked this week. Cleewox and Carter Lakes in the Northwest Zone are scheduled to be planted next week with Willamette Valley lakes getting planted in mid-February.

Soapbox Update: **HELP US HELP YOU!!**

Be sure to catch us at the 2005 Portland Sportsman show. The dates for this years show is February 9th – 13th and we will be in **booth #317** with plenty of fishing supplies and information. I will also be giving the 2005 run forecast information in the Blue Theater on Feb. 10th at 6:00 p.m., the 11th at 7:00 p.m., and at noon on the 12th. I have some exciting news about our upcoming sportfisheries and will give you insight you won't find anywhere else. After the presentation, feel free to stop by the booth for any other questions you may have.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Fishing below Bonneville remains slow. Cold water is likely the culprit but the fish just don't seem to be present in many of their traditional haunts. **Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** put in back to back days last week (Friday and Saturday, Jan 28th and 29th). On Friday, he spent the day below Bonneville Dam for a grand total of 4 bites, or which he got 2 fish- both shakers! He searched everywhere but came up disappointed. One glaring fact that Dan noted was the excessive number of sea-lions working the area.!? What? Already? Dan noticed they were flipping around red-meated fish but it seems way too early for good numbers of springers to be present. Highly likely, they are exercising their steelhead impacts! He counted between 12 and 15 mammals and at any given time, they had a couple of fish each that they were playing catch with. Be sure to stop by our booth (#317 at the Sportsmen's Show) to get your marine mammal stickers- the ones with the red circle and cross through the middle! The next day, Dan fished above Bonneville (wow! no sea-lions!) and came up with much better results. Dan landed 25+ fish in a short matter of 3 hours, got 2 keepers for his 2 customers and headed for the barn. He was fishing near Stevenson. ODF&W checks are similar from the weekend angling crowd. Fishing has been slow from Troutdale to Rainier and really slow in the gorge. Bank angling has also tapered off. The best bite in the river right now is taking place above Bonneville Dam. We are clearly in need of some form of stimuli!

Salmon effort was on the rise with the improving weather but success has still been slow. The warmer weather this weekend could again stimulate interest but way too early to have high expectations.

The Guide's Forecast – The water temperatures should warm slightly on the Columbia this weekend but not enough to put on a good show for weekend anglers. Sturgeon fishing should remain poor this week although a decent pilot run of smelt may make their way upstream with the warming trend. They are certainly due to show in the lower stretches of the Columbia - smelt that is! The best bet for sturgeon should actually be in the Bonneville Pool and smelt has been the best producer for guides in the area. The fish below Bonneville were in larger numbers in the shallower water but until the water warms up a bit or a fresh batch of smelt show, results will likely remain poor. Commercial netters in the lower river have been picking up some smelt but a 25 pound set is considered good at this point. I predict commercial netters will do considerably better this week in the mainstem Columbia. We may be just a few weeks away from better sturgeon fishing - or it may just be safe to say, it can't get any worse.....

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Plunkers fishing the Willamette from the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas River remain hopeful despite recent inactivity. Long rods may be seen now with distance casting for springers about evenly divided with the tactic of near-shore angling for hatchery-bound, bank-hugging, Clackamas-bound steelhead.

Both techniques have been equally productive. That is to say, not very.

The new dock below the I-205 Bridge along with the boats working that area are indicative of the spring

Chinook to come rather than ongoing action. A few have been taken over the last week.

Willamette Falls counts remain in the double digits daily with the year-to-date total near 1,500, which would indicate that some are slipping by the lower-river plunkers. Water clarity is over four feet with temperatures in the mid to upper 40s.

Sturgeon fishermen on the lower Willamette found mostly shorts in their attempt to land fish which meet the minimum length requirements over the last retention period. Better prospects are in Multnomah Channel where anglers will find slightly higher water temperatures.

The Guide's Forecast – With water temperatures rising in the lower Columbia as the water continues to clear and the level drops a couple of inches daily, to say that rain is needed to spark a salmon and steelhead bite should come as no surprise. Plunkers patiently plying the water below the mouth of the Clackamas are hopeful but without significant precipitation, there will be no joy for banks anglers.

Trollers below the I-305 Bridge should see a few spring chinook with emphasis on "few." As the season progresses, numbers of springers entering the Willamette will increase. The best chances for an encounter will be the early morning hours until conditions improve.

Warmer water temps should encourage the sturgeon bite, but anglers shouldn't expect any hot action until there's more color and flow. The good tides will help, especially in the lower Multnomah Channel on the outgoing in the late afternoon. Smelt would be the obvious choice to tempt sturgeon with the seasonal run imminent, but anglers might also include squid as an alternate offering. Moving to find keepers is always a good idea as is keeping a variety of scents on hand.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The couple of broodstock steelhead which have appeared at Eagle Creek bodes well for the upcoming winter run. Let's hope so; fishing has been very slow over the last week on the Clack.

Sandy steelheaders are doing little better. Winter fish can be seen rolling but are difficult to entice. The upper river has been more productive than the lower.

The Guide's Forecast – Time is the only factor in favor of steelheaders in the upcoming week. As the season progresses and biological clocks continue to tick, steelhead will run even if the river conditions aren't optimal. Many of the fish destined for the Clackamas and all those bound for the Sandy River are progeny of wild brood stock. Since the wild fish run later in the year, these fin-clipped first-generation offspring follow the same schedule. This means the run is just now getting underway and there's still hope for a rewarding season.

Practice stealth and implement the most extreme of low-water tactics. Long, light leaders and diminutive offerings will take fish. When our efforts bring results, we rightfully savor a hard-won victory made sweeter by succeeding under adverse circumstances.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Steelhead fishing has tapered since the last rain freshet. It wasn't all that impressive after the rain but it's even slower now! One guide reported fishing the Wilson River 3 days in a row for a single bite! He managed to get into some other action in nearby Trask and Nestucca Rivers but a 3 opportunity day is considered good these days! I drove by the mouth of Cedar Creek on Three Rivers on 1/31 and there were only a few vehicles in the parking lot. I just got my hands on the returns to the North Coast hatcheries for January. It's no secret but this is shaping up to be the lowest return in the last 4 years. The winter of 2000/2001 was poorer yet while 2001/2002 was the highest in the last 10 years! Although down, it wasn't as low as one might think for the Alsea River-

about 30% fewer adults returning for the month. At Cedar Creek on Three Rivers, the run is down about 60% from the recent few years. And on the North Fork of the Nehalem, it's actually a little above the 10 year average! If history repeats itself, the early hatchery run on the Wilson, Nestucca and North Fork Nehalem Rivers is about 80% over. This isn't good news for steelheaders that feel they really haven't gotten their fill so far. Thankfully, we still have the native run to fall back on.

I talked with ODF&W biologist Robert Bradley late last week and got some insider information. He's the guy pictured on our homepage this week at www.TheGuidesForecast.com. I had quizzed Robert as to the exact numbers of smolts released hoping it would lead to an answer as to why we weren't seeing a good return this year. Well, I got the answer I was looking for but even though there was a 30% reduction in the Alsea stock plants in the Wilson River, the Alsea reduction was supplemented by higher numbers of wild broodstock smolts. Keep in mind that the bulk of these broodstock returns will take place in February and March so we DO have something to look forward to! Robert also pointed out that many of the fish are migrating through the lower river at a faster pace and ending up at the trap near the South Fork Prison Camp on the upper Wilson. A change in liberation location has altered the areas where fish will be holding up this year. A recycling program is underway and scores of fish have been recycled through the system. The 2003 goal was to plant about 100,000 smolts in the Wilson River of which half will be the early returning Alsea stock and the other half wild broodstock returns. On top of this, an additional 30,000 juveniles were planted in the Kilchis River of which would have been the earlier returning Alsea stock. The goal for 2006 is back to 120,000 fish stockings but 80,000 need to come from the wild broodstock program and 40,000 will come from the early returning Alsea stock of fish. In addition, 40,000 plants of Alsea stock fish will be put into the Kilchis River. Did you get all that? You know when we go on blabbing about these types of programs, the fishing must be slow.....

Well, maybe there is some good news in the North Coast district. We have sturgeon tides coming up! But that info belongs in the next section. Sturgeon fishing in Tillamook Bay has been fair. The weather has been conducive to a concerted effort and it sure helps that there are some fish around. Most effort continues to take place in the south channel towards the upper part but mud shrimp is becoming hard to find. Sand shrimp will work fine but they are running small right now. They also fall to the crabs much easier than mud shrimp does. **Avid angler Pat Vining** hit Tillamook Bay's south channel on 2/1 and only got one bite but saw one boat get 4 fish of which at least 2 were keepers. They were using sand shrimp.

Crabbing has been fair on both Tillamook and Netarts Bay despite the high pressure. Watch for calm seas during this high front.

The Guide's Forecast – The best bet for this weekend will be great tides for Tillamook Bay sturgeon! The south channel will continue to be the "go-to" place but your best bet will be to call ahead for bait reservations. Tillamook Bait at (503) 842-5031 or Garibaldi Marina at (503) 322-3312 will be your best bets for mud shrimp. Note their open hours or you could get stuck without bait and you won't want that for this weekend. Clamming on the Clatsop Beaches should be excellent as well as long as you are prepared for late afternoon tides. The peak of the series is on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday although best clamming and crabbing takes place on the early part of the series (Sat and Sun). This will be your best bet for coastal aquatic recreation this weekend!

Desperate steelheaders should try the mainstem Nehalem for a rare, but early wild winter fish or perhaps a spawned out stray hatchery fish. There may be a few around and the conditions should be ideal for that river. The other major producers (Wilson, Trask, Kilchis and Nestucca) will not be major producers this weekend. The water is dropping and clearing which will make for spooky fish. For the few anglers that are versed in tidewater fishing for steelhead, there may be some good opportunity, however, if you can make an approach without spooking the fish. Bobbers and jigs or hardware may take a rare hatchery fish on the Nestucca or lower Wilson and maybe a native on the Trask. Whatever you do, don't expect great results if you are going steelhead fishing on the North Oregon Coast!

I'm headed for the Olympic Peninsula!

Crabbing should taper off with the more extreme tides but if the seas remain calm, opportunities may exist for sport crabbers working just north or south of the Tillamook Bay entrance. Safety needs to be a high priority however. Stay away from the jetty tips, cross the bar only on the incoming tide and make sure you are back before the ebb. Check the buoy report and ask the local marinas what the ocean conditions are before venturing out!

Central & South Coast Reports – Crabbing has been fair to good at Yaquina Bay although the strong weekend tidal exchange will hamper efforts. Rock and jetty fishermen are taking decent numbers of rockfish. Ocean charter boats continue to do well for bottom fish.

Steelheaders on the South coast seem to be fairing far better than on the North coast or the valley.

Siletz anglers remain rightfully optimistic as catches of wild fish remain fair and the late-running broodstock steelhead stocked here are yet to come.

The South Fork Coquille held up well over the weekend with several winter steelhead limits reported.

Steelheaders on the main stem of the Umpqua reporting as of January 31st decent steelhead catches continue to be taken. Rain will improve conditioned and prospects here, but at least the action hasn't ceased completely.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Fly fishing on the Deschutes is holding up in Mack's Canyon. Blue-winged Olives are the primary dry pattern one with Golden Stone nymphs also taking fish. The same patterns have been effective on Fall River, particularly in the afternoons.

The Grande Ronde River should continue to fish well through February.

Northwest Trout - While no trout were stocked this week, Cleewox and Carter Lakes are scheduled to be planted on February 7th in the Northwest Zone with Willamette Valley lakes getting some state-raised rainbow trout around Valentines Day.

Reader Email

Sometimes the Email we receive at The Guide's Forecast World Headquarters* raise questions. Occasionally, the mailbag requires clarification ... or even decryption. The following Emails are examples. While we openly welcome questions and suggestion, we encourage all who write to be specific ... or at least provide us a clue regarding the subject.

For instance, Jim R. wrote: "**what the hell are you talking about the season hasn't even started**"

That was the entire Email and, yes, the original was in red. To this, **pro guide Bob Rees** replied, "Jim- Not sure what your comment is referencing to. The only thing I could find is our reference to Nehalem River/Bay sturgeon fishing. There frequently is winter/spring fishing opportunities in the tidewater section. Is that what you are referencing?"

Jim R. responded, "steelhead fishing is not over and winding down on the Siuslaw river it hasn't really even started"

Oh. That'd be my (Michael's) report, which stated on January 29th, 2005, "The Siuslaw is on the tail end of a winter steelhead run which occurs earlier than most other South coast rivers." and to which I responded that this was from a combination of reports, primarily from an older fellow who lives on the Siuslaw and has been very reliable in the information he has provided.

We received another Email to which we were unable to respond other than to ask what the question meant. Terry B. wrote, "HI This could be why we are suffering so much on our recent outings. do you get this one? 459"

Frankly, we didn't "get this one" and are awaiting clarification. If we hear from Terry, we'll share the exchange here next week. Stay tuned.

A couple of folks wrote recently with similar questions, most recently, Debbie G. who asked, "I wanted to know if you guys know how to find out the water temperatures for the Columbia and Willamette River? It makes a difference with the sturgeon. Thanks"

You're right, Debbie, it can make a big difference. Bob came through on this one and for the benefit of others who have written and those who may need the information, it appears this week in the **Random Links** section.

Kap'n Ken Johnson kindly chimed in again this week from the Willamette River below the Clackamas mouth, "I did today and the "Big Guns" are coming out. Today, Sunday the 29th, there were approximately 18-20 Steelie poles right at Meldrum Bar up to The Point. Along the edge up by The Garden Hole, there were probably 8 or 9 long rods, hoping for an early Springer. At The Blacktop, there were three 12 footers in wait for "The Big Juan" but no blood on the deck I think the feeling is, the Steelhead are just not going to show and because there has been a couple "Nookers" caught just recently, the fever has started, just a bit, so might as well get the 12'-14' Cannons out...Just in case! They fish for both fish this time of year the same so they can catch either a Steelie of a Chinookie. The Chinook are usually a littler further out, however, but very few Steelhead are currently being taken near shore, so...What the heck! Let her fly, we can sit here and catch NEITHER! Or, one of each! It's a bit early for Chinook, but when they start biting soon, it will be the 4-5 year olds and we'll probably see some 25-35 pounders and the occasional 40+brought to shore and boat. It's all a matter of time and most of these guys have a lot of that on their hands. They know, you can't catch a fish unless you're line is in the water, so why not start now!"

In a couple of updates following the one above, Kap'n Ken said the situation has not changed or improved with the water level dropping a couple of inches a day.

Hey, we all know it's been tough catching a fish lately, but that makes the fishing stories, reports and pictures that we receive just that much sweeter. Thanks to all who share their experiences.

Write to the TGF staff:

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*Disclaimer: The Guide's Forecast World Headquarters is a figment of the fertile imagination of our own Michael Teague and does not exist in reality. We gather and coordinate information and reports, write TGF and put it on the Internet for then benefit of subscribers from three separate geographical locations over the Internet.

Random Links

Thanks and a tip o' the fishin' cap to **pro guide Bob Rees** who provided these two data sites!

Water temperature information for the Willamette (will update later into the season):

*<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/ODFWhtml/InfoCntrFish/InterFish/Willam.html>

For the Columbia water temps, look here:

*<http://www.fpc.org/tempgraphs/NETtempgraph.aspx>"

A temperature-related link from the files. El Niño diagnostic discussion:

*http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/

Weekly Quote - "As President, I was able to save with the stroke of the pen a hundred million acres of wilderness area in Alaska. This is the kind of thing that is gratifying to a President, but to be on a solitary stream with good friends, with a fly rod in your hand, and to have a successfully or even an unsuccessful day--they're all successful--is an even greater delight." -Jimmy Carter

GOOD LUCK!