

The Guide's Forecast - volume 6 issue number 32

Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 11th – February 17th, 2005**

Fisheries Update: Spring Chinook are on their way so make sure that you have the tools you need to put more fish in the creel! Our technical report #1- Willamette River Spring Chinook Tactics and Locations for the Boat Angler is a real hit and a real help! These reports and several more are available at: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/techrpt.shtml>.

Also, if you don't catch our smokin' deals at the Sportsmen's Show on Bob's Bait Wraps and Stainless Steel Pliers, you can order right from our web site at: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/baitwrap.shtml>. These are the tools you need for the spring Chinook this season!

Another week of armchair reporting for us writers at TGF. If we are suggesting going to the Sportsmen Show over fishing, well, I think that all speaks for itself.

Subscribers - get discount coupons to this event in the Random Links section of the full version of this report!

Sturgeon fishing on the Columbia remains poor and prospects don't look all that favorable. Rumors of smelt in the lower river may have some effect but it just seems a lack of presence may take more than a pilot run to stimulate success.

Springer fishing on the big river is really no better. It's just too big of a body of water for too few fish (and still too cold) to expect measurable results.

The north coast is a biological desert. The weak rain freshet didn't produce the results most has expected and no precipitation is in sight. Poor tides will make for even poorer steelhead opportunities and sturgeon fishing will likely drop off as well. Crabbing and bottom fishing may be a good option as calm seas may prevail if the east wind show up.

All South coast rivers need rain. Low, clear, cold water is the rule along with the sort of fishing one might expect such conditions. It's slow. The few being taken on the Siletz have been natives. Pressure on the Umpqua is up, steelheading is fair. Reports from the Alsea, Coquille, Elk, Sixes, and even the usually productive Rogue River are all lousy.

It's been another slow, slow week on the Clackamas. Most of the few steelies taken on the Sandy over the last week have been natives.

Sturgeon of legal size are somewhere but not in the lower Willamette. The few springers taken by optimistic trollers were a glimmer of hope as this fishery enters its infancy for the year.

This week, Carter and Cleawox Lakes in the Northwest Zone were stocked with trout. Vernonia Pond received 350 steelhead.

Soapbox Update: Tired of NOT catching any steelhead this winter. Well, get ready to catch even fewer in your future.....**if** you don't stand up and tell the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioners what you think about a proposal to increase the incidental steelhead take **3 fold** in the winter gillnet fishery! **On Friday, February 12th, anglers must exercise their right to express their thoughts on this proposal to the Commissioners at the Sam Cox building in Troutdale, Oregon.** The meeting starts at 8:00 a.m. at 1106 East Columbia River Highway. The Commission needs to hear how you value the wild steelhead resource and the work we have done to protect and enhance it through conservation efforts such as catch-and-release fisheries and restoration work. The Washington Commission has failed its sportanglers and are calling for a doubling of the steelhead take. It is only the Oregon Commission that can stave off this attack at this point. Your input is vital in this process!

Columbia River Fishing Report – Another easy week for us fish reporters as most fisheries in Oregon remain at disappointing levels. On the Columbia, frustrated anglers are taking their efforts elsewhere when downriver fisheries are not producing like they should be. The Bonneville Pool remains one of the best options on the Columbia River as **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** indicated. Dan stated his observations of similar water temperatures above Bonneville as below scratching the theory that it was a factor in low success rates this winter. Dan said it seems to clearly be a case of fish presence. So where are the sturgeon of the lower Columbia? Gillnet success in recent weeks indicate that there really isn't a whole lot of fish present in the lower river. Your guess is as good as mine as to where these fish are hiding out.

Rumors of large schools of bait fish are circling in the fishing community. One avid angler told me at the Sportsmen Show on 2/9 that he witnessed large numbers of feeding birds working the water in the Blind Channel just above the Astoria/Megler Bridge. Although he couldn't identify the baitfish, we both theorized that they were smelt. The angler then told me that he has witnessed herring working these waters as well this time of year. One thing is for certain, the smelt are due! Needless to say, catch rates remain very poor in the entire lower river below Bonneville Dam.

Action is not any better for early run spring Chinook. Despite decent reports that a small number of springers are being taken from Coon Island in the Multnomah Channel, success in the mainstem can be pretty challenging with such a big body of water and cold water temperatures. One angler reports slow action right at the mouth of the Multnomah Channel in St. Helens after an afternoon's effort there last weekend.

Razor clamming was excellent on Oregon and Washington beaches during last week's minus tide series. I hope you were there to take advantage of it!

The Guide's Forecast – The outlook is not pretty. Despite the possibility that smelt are moving into the system, sturgeon action will likely remain poor in the lower Columbia. Smelt fishers may have some success however if they know of some good locations in the Bonneville Pool. Increase your success by getting your hands on some fresh smelt if they become available. Commercial netters in the lower river will certainly provide if the mother lode comes in. Yes, fresh smelt will work remarkably in the Bonneville Pool if given the chance.

Way too early to get excited about springer prospects on the big river. A forecast of dry, cool weather next week coupled with an east wind spells certain doom for desperate salmon anglers on the big river. Not only are you likely to get skunked, you will stand a fairly reasonable chance of getting hypothermic!

I have an idea, hit my 2005 Oregon fishing forecast at the Sportsmen Show on Saturday. I am talking about fishing prospects in the Blue Theater around the noon hour! It'll be much more exciting than freezing your bells off- as in cow bells, guys.....the ones on the end of your rod.....never mind!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Plunkers below the mouth of the Clackamas have taken an occasional steelhead but are anxious for the spring chinook run to get underway. Trollers are working the river with mixed success. One fish in the course of a long day is considered a worthwhile outing.

While backrolled prawn spinners have enticed the occasional springer from the Willamette at the Garbage Hole (below the I-205 Bridge) and at Oregon City, one must consider that it's only February. Statistics from 2004 show 100 spring chinook kept through March 1st. From that date through March 28th, anglers made 35,000 trips to take 2,221 springer. It's early yet.

The steelhead in the lower Willamette far outnumber any springers at this time of year, as reflected by this comment from **Pro guide Jack Glass (503-666-5370)**, "Sat & Sun (Feb, 4th & 5th) went to the Willamette half day trips landed 7 steelhead 2 wilds 5 hatchery."

Sturgeon fishing on the lower Willamette is mostly a shaker show. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** mentions some of the reasons and shares suggestions in his report this week, "Been doing some sturgeon fishing in the lower Willamette where the water temperature is 46 degrees. Water temperature in the Columbia is only 40 degrees. Unfortunately the river level is so low in the Willamette that you spend half the day facing upriver with the incoming tide. We have been using smelt and squid with the best bites on a smelt with squid tentacles. The best fishing period has been on the ebb tide. I'll will be at the sport show all week in the G.I. Joe's booth."

The North Santiam flow is about 20% of what it was last year at this time.

The Guide's Forecast – The temperature gauge at Willamette Falls actually dipped below the freezing mark in the second week of January, hovering in the 31 to 32 degree range for several days. The current reading in the mid-40s is definitely an improvement, but could be better. Yeah, it's the lack of rain lament again. We're as sick of writing about it as you are of reading it.

Willamette flows are dropping to the 9,000 cfs mark and unless the weather turns around, the showers this weekend won't help.

Steelheading would be the only pursuit the might make a lower Willamette trip worthwhile although the kids are guaranteed success fishing the trout pond at the Sportsmen's Show.

What snow pack? The Army Corps of Engineers has been unable to predict when (or even if) Detroit Reservoir at the headwaters of the North Santiam River will fill this spring. That would mean the water level and flow in the river would be almost entirely dependent upon rainfall. Oops - what rainfall? Actually, the unusually low water levels and flows at 1,000 cfs or less simplifies the fish-finding process and makes it easier for driftboaters, but does not bode well in the long term. While summer steelhead have not been included in counts at Willamette Falls, they continue to be caught occasionally in the Santiam. Counts at the Falls will include summer fish starting in March. Fishing on the North Santiam will be worthwhile long about April and should offer fine summer steelheading starting in May.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Currently, steelheading remains an unrewarding pursuit on the Clackamas River.

The few fish hooked on the Sandy River last week were almost exclusively of native origin which must be turned loose to complete their life cycle. This situation seems to have reversed recently, and while it's still slow, the majority taken this week have been hatchery keepers. In Cedar Creek, a few winter hatchery fish may be seen holding in deeper areas but which are very difficult to tempt.

The Guide's Forecast – It would seem logical that without a change in the weather, conditions on the Clackamas will not improve. The only thing working in the angler's favor is time. Steelhead have a biological clock running and a life cycle imperative. This won't be the best week to try, however.

Steelheaders would be wise to follow the advice of an expert like **Pro guide Jack Glass (503-666-5370)** who wrote on February 7th with this suggestion for these challenging conditions, "The Sandy has some fish the water came up a bit but still low. Bobber and jig is working and drifting small baits of eggs is my preferred method during these low conditions."

Be aware that the Sandy Chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders is holding their annual 'Frostbite Follies,' on Saturday, February 12th. This event combines fishing and river cleanup, during which a flotilla of 15 boats or so which will result in extra traffic from Oxbow to Dabney during the day.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Mixed reports are coming in from this weeks fishing guides on the north coast. Many are quite disappointed with the season and it's easy to see why. **Pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** reported numerous opportunities on Monday, 2/7 on the Wilson River. Although Dave only ended up landing 1 fish, it was hard giving the message to his customers that they can't set the hook too early when on the receiving end of a sidedrifting biter. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** also fished the Wilson River but came up with not-so-much as even a bite that same day. Although guide results varied slightly, the overall picture for the miniscule rain freshet was consistently poor. All north coast rivers report poor results and even one of the better options a bit south- the Siletz is uncharacteristically pathetic.

One bright spot in the otherwise crummy reports came from **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** who wrote, "Nestucca is still a bit slow. River levels are near perfect, the sad part is the weather is great, but we will be in Portland for the Sportsmen's Show. As a note, the fish last week were responding well on orange, with small baits of eggs or shrimp. We also went on a little recon mission, and found good numbers around Moon Creek. Keep in mind that above Moon Creek, it is artificial only. They were tearing up jigs when we found them, and some nice hatchery fish too! Have a great week, and we hope to see you all at the show. We are booth #1236 in hall E. Please stop by and say hello, and to talk fishing."

Granted, this is the time of year when the big transition takes place. The hatchery fish are on the way out- usually spent from recent spawning and the wild fish have a few weeks to go before peak migration. I'll just point out however that last year during the Sportsmen Show, the wild fish fishing on the Wilson River was out of this world! Also noteworthy however is the fact we had a significant rain freshet to work from.

Minus tides were still here late in the week for sturgeon prospectors to ply the waters of Tillamook Bay. Good results were had for patient (and fortunate) anglers that were able to land on the right spot in the south and middle channels of the estuary. Mud shrimp were hard to come by but those anglers that did get their hands on them and larger sand shrimp found favorable results.

Bay crabbing held up fine and press releases from ODF&W indicate a record year of harvest in the South of Falcon crab fishery from the commercial fleet. Most recreational crabbers have found favor with this years results but increased pressure is certainly not making for easy limits.

The Guide's Forecast – Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, how does lower water conditions, a cold, east wind and in-between runs grab 'ya? No need to head west for winter steelhead this weekend cause it just isn't going to be a pretty sight. The common theme remains.....we need RAIN! If for some reason, you have to get away from the crowds at the Sportsmen Show, the lower Wilson downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge or a lower float from Donaldson's to Sollie Smith may yield an occasional steelhead. You will certainly have to employ low water techniques such as bobbers and jigs or deep diving flatfish in slow flows. If ever I had to predict poor results on the north coast, it would have to be this week. We don't even have a good tide to push steelhead into the lower stretches or target sturgeon in the bay slots. The one saving grace may be an ocean option for rockfish and crab. If the east winds materialize as predicted, it could calm the seas making for a real pleasant experience in big blue but keep it safe! But just how inspired are you, really...?

Central & South Coast Reports – One thing anglers might keep in mind is that in winter steelheading, unlike the pursuit of summer fish, the daylight hours are often better than at first light. The few degrees of extra water warmth resulting from sunlight is often all that's required to turn on metalheads.

While steelheading has stalled on the Alsea and Coquille Rivers, it remains fair on the Umpqua where the water level is down and the fishing pressure is up. Jigs presented naturally beneath floats have been fooling a few chromers here with a 21-pound buck falling to one lucky jig fisherman on Saturday, February 5th.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) adds this, "The Alsea is low and clear and the steelhead fishing is poor. There is an occasional steelhead or two showing up but with no real rain in sight the fishing outlook remains grim."

The Elk and Sixes Rivers are also low and slow.

The Rogue River is extremely low and clear. Steelheading is as slow as one might expect in such adverse conditions although a few adults and half-pounders are being caught on eggs in the Agness area.

All South coast rivers would benefit from rain. The Dungeness don't mind the lack of rain, however, with Coos and Winchester Bays producing easy limits.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) writes, "The Grande Ronde River was very productive last week with Oregon anglers recording a catch rate of about four hours per fish and Washington anglers tallying less than eight hours per fish. Oregon anglers that were interviewed landed 32 hatchery and 11 wild

steelhead and Washington anglers landed 32 hatchery and 18 wild fish.

The creel survey confirms that steelhead are still holding in the lower portion of the Grande Ronde. Although they are moving up, it will be later in the month before substantial numbers of steelhead arrive in the Wallowa River.

The first creel check of the season for the Wallowa River shows a catch rate of 14 hours per fish with eight hatchery and four wild steelhead landed. Anglers that were checked here invested 168 hours of fishing to catch their dozen steelhead, nearly as many hours at Oregon anglers on the Grande Ronde invested to land 42 steelhead, and about half the hours spent on the Grande Ronde in Washington to catch 50 steelhead.

At Rondowa anglers averaged 10 hours per fish, landing seven hatchery and four wild fish.

Last week in Washington Bill Vail at Boggan's Oasis considered the first four days of the week to be very good fishing, then a weather change slowed fishing on Friday and Saturday, the days that the creel checker worked, so overall fishing in Washington is probably better than the creel statistics suggest.

Daily temperatures along the river in Washington last week were in the 50s - obviously not "real" steelheading weather, but sometimes you just have to tolerate conditions like this. Vail says that the vast majority of the anglers are fishing "gear," such as corkies and roe and bobber and jig with nobody fly fishing that he was aware of."

Avid angler 'Dobe' adds this from the East side, "Last week I fished Lake Billy Chinook for two days straight. We caught 2 Bull Trout on the first day and nothing the second. We took the Bulls while jigging for kokanee, which isn't all that unusual. The Kokes were schooling up in the late afternoon and you can find them by watching for the school breaking the water. Stay off the school and cast jigs into the school and retrieve. The Metolius Arm opens up on March 1st and usually that means excellent fishing for the Bull Trout and the Kokanee. A tribal permit is required to fish the Metolius Arm."

And now for something entirely different ... and kinda cool: "Minam Motel and Market in conjunction with Wallowa Union Railroad offer the first ever steelheading-fishing-by-rail down the Wallowa Wild and Scenic Waterway. Anglers will have the entire 10 mile stretch of river virtually to themselves and the steelhead. The wild and scenic waterway is unspoiled and dazzling to behold."

The above quote is from the Minam Motel and Market website. It seems like an interesting way to explore and it's only \$40 a day. Check it out for more information: *<http://www.minammotel.com/>

Northwest Bass & Panfish - For information on warmwater gamefishing around the Pacific Northwest, be certain to stop by the Oregon Bass and Panfish Club booth at the Sportsmen's Show. You'll meet friendly helpful people who really know how to catch fish and are willing to share their secrets to success.

Northwest Trout - This week, Carter and Cleawox Lakes in the Northwest Zone were stocked with trout. Vernonia Pond received 350 steelhead. On Valentines Day, the following North coast waters will receive an infusion of state-raised rainbows Alder Lake, Buck Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake, Munsel Lake, North Georgia Lake, Perkins Lake and Siltcoos Lagoon. Willamette Valley lakes and ponds will also get a little ODFW lovin' on February 14th when Mt. Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Canal will receive a mix of catchable and larger trout.

Henry Hagg Lake, the jewel of Scoggin Valley, will open to fishing on March 5th. Can springtime be far behind?

Reader Email

Avid angler and irregular contributor Kap'n Ken Johnson reports his observations on the Willamette below the mouth of the Clackamas River, "The "Meldrum Bar" crowd are out in force...All 8-10 of them. So far this year a couple of Chinook have been brought to the bank but that's about it. There is 1-2 Steelhead caught, almost every day now, but that is a far cry from the "normal" 15-20. The long poles are coming out, all with sharp [Gamakatsu's](#), [mooching rigs](#) and the norm is a small Spin-n-Glo with a whole Prawn. There's a couple of guys who use only the Prawn Tail for their offering. In the last 7 days, two Chinook have been caught off "The Blacktop" but the water is 4-5 feet down, gin clear and sloooooooooooooow moving as far as current goes. It's only good on an outgoing tide unless you're fishing on the up-river side of the Clackamas mouth on the banks at Clackamette Park. A few fish are being caught there...1-3 per week. Most "Avid Fishermen" are heading to Tony's, buying a Silver and telling their wives what great fishermen they are and that it "Does pay to go fishing everyday...No matter what!" Rain...That's what the doctor ordered. Matter of fat, until it rains and the river levels go up 3-4 feet, "The Doctor" probably just won't be in his office, down by the river side. KaptnKen "

Subscriber Randy L. wrote to TGF via the contact form on our website with this question: "I just purchased a sea ray 26 weekender and it has garmin 230 plotter but doesn't include any chart.. I would like to know if you know of any for Newport Oregon or charts that would cover that thank you."

Bob Rees responded: "I am sure if you talk to the pros at Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor, they can help you out. I would find it hard to believe that there isn't a chart

for that machine. Many charts are universal to fit any brand GPS. Look them up at the show or call them!"

Subscriber Ken H. wrote to ask, "Sometime last year, I believe during fall salmon, I seem to recall one of your reports contained a photo of your favorite spinners for salmon (there were 4 of them or so, I think). I don't recall for sure if you were reporting on Spring salmon in Tillamook Bay or Fall salmon at Tillamook or Buoy 10. I seem to have lost track of my old reports during a recent change of computers. If you can recall the report I'm talking about, is there any way for you to send me a copy of that photo? I'd like to make a few new spinners for the coming season and I'd like to include some of your favorites, but I can't remember what they all were. Thanks much."

No problem, Ken! All subscribers have access to the TGF archives. For something such as this, just pick the month when the runs are strong. I believe Bob has run several close-up shots of the most effective spinners and has done so every year.

Finally, TGF staff writer Michael Teague had this announcement, "Winner of a two-day Valentine's getaway on the Wilson River is: my wife. Congratulations and thank you ... for everything."

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Smoking fish with Steelhead University:

*http://www.steelheaduniversity.com/smoked_fish.html

Here's your discount coupon to the Sportsmen's Show! Print up all you need:

*<http://www.oloughlintradeshows.com/ots-shows-ss-pnw-coupon.html>

Weekly Quote - "It'll be much more exciting than freezing your bells off- as in cow bells, guys.....the ones on the end of your rod.....never mind!" - Bob Rees

GOOD LUCK!