

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **June 13<sup>th</sup> – June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Oversize sturgeon fishing is in full swing in the Columbia River Gorge. Fresh shad is the only bait to use and is still challenging to find on most days. Small Dick Nite spoons in metallic colors are producing results in non-traditional areas. Some anglers are illegally targeting sturgeon above the deadline at Marker 85 so check regulations carefully before going out.

The summer steelhead fishery is slated to open on June 16<sup>th</sup> from I-5 to Tongue Point. Weak tides this week doesn't bode well for success but returns this year have been impressive so a productive season is anticipated.

Lower Willamette anglers must endure low water temperatures and high levels again this week. Hopefully, improved weather will warm the river this week. Shad fishing is slow although summer steelhead are being taken and the daily counts have been good at Willamette Falls. Sturgeon fishing has been slow.

McKenzie water levels are forecast to drop this week as the weather warms. Expect to see Golden Stonefly hatches. Fishing has been good on the lower river.

The waters of the Clackamas remain high and cool. Steelhead fishing is slow although a few spring chinook have been hooked.

A few summers have been landed on the Sandy and spring chinook action has picked up recently. The mouth of the river is producing but fish are distributed throughout the river. The bulk of the catch are natives and must be released unharmed.

Scheduled for trout stocking this week are North Fork Reservoir, Silver Creek Reservoir, Small Fry Lake, Timber Lake, Timothy Meadows Reservoir, Trillium Lake, Big Cliff Reservoir, Breitenbush River, Detroit Reservoir, Leaburg Lake, the McKenzie River above and below Leaburg Lake and the Santiam River above Detroit.

**Northwest** – Estuary sturgeon fishing on the lower Columbia remains challenging for most. Poor weather conditions contributed to smaller effort recently but warmer temperatures are needed to stimulate biting fish. Most recently, fishing right at Tongue Point has been productive but some keepers were also coming from lower Desdemona Sands early in the week.

There have been numerous anglers reporting on the success of Gulp! Shrimp in recent weeks. We know Gulp! is a very effective bait and although I have not had large success on it for sturgeon myself, in recent weeks, anglers are swearing by the stuff. It would make sense to use if these fish are keyed in on small shrimp that the effective scent release of Gulp! Baits would be very effective in these conditions. One thing is for sure, they are hard to find in stores right now and that wouldn't be the case if they didn't work!

Spring chinook action in Tillamook Bay remains sporadic and hatchery keepers will likely become more scarce as the month wears on. River levels rose over the weekend making the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers great options for driftboaters in search of freshwater salmon. Bank angling should improve this week. Summer steelhead should also be available on the Wilson and

Nestucca Rivers.

A rough ocean kept most saltwater anglers at bay except Sunday when a few more chinook were taken in the North of Falcon fishery on hardware.

Last weeks minus tide series produced good razor clamming along Clatsop County Beaches but younger age classes of clams are oddly absent. Researchers are looking at possible causes for mortality including winter beach erosion and a bacteria generated from dead zones that could be killing juveniles.

**Southwest** – Warm weather inland often means high winds and rough seas. Long-range forecasts indicate friendly ocean conditions for offshore boaters this coming weekend providing the inland temperatures don't cause high winds to develop.

Spring all-depth halibut fishers had taken 45% of the season quota as of the last opener in May. Anglers will have another chance at the big, deep-water flatfish Thursday through Saturday this week.

The next minus tide series will start the week of June 16th. During the last series, beach-goers enjoyed fine clam digging and tide-pooling.

Coos Bay near Charleston is one of the few places that has delivered keeper Dungeness recently.

Springer fishing is slow on the lower Rogue. Spring chinook anglers may keep only hatchery springers on the lower Rogue River due to low numbers of wild fish this year. This restriction will be lifted on July 12th.

Limits of bottomfish are being taken offshore just outside Brookings Harbor. Large rockfish and cabezon have been in the mix with lures as effective as bait recently.

Surf perch fishing continues to be phenomenal off south coast beaches, delivering 15-fish limits to those who care to clean that many.

While the action slowed with cold fronts at Diamond Lake over Free Fishing weekend, warm, stable conditions this week are expected to result in good catches.

Section 5 of the Rogue River and Diamond Lake are scheduled to be planted with trout.

**Eastern** – The Deschutes has dropped and cleared with Golden Stones and Salmonflies abundant from Warm Springs to Maupin. So are rattlesnakes so watch your step.

Despite near-freezing overnight air temperatures and 47-degree water, John Day smallmouth fishers are enjoying fair results for nice-sized fish.

**SW Washington** – The North Fork of the Lewis River is producing excellent catches of summer steelhead. The Cowlitz is also a good option for steelhead.

Several systems are now closed to the taking of salmon including the Lewis River and Drano Lake.

The Klickitat River is beginning to produce catches of salmon and summer steelhead.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Anglers are still showing up in fair numbers anticipating better fishing on the lower Columbia River for sturgeon. Most recently, the bite has picked up out of Hammond and sporadic catches are coming from the Tongue Point area as well. Starting upriver, anglers fishing the most popular area for sturgeon, Tongue Point, have been having some fair days for keepers in the deep water just upstream of the point. Anglers were drawn to that area earlier in the week just to get out of the wicked SW wind we experienced. It kept many people from fishing but those that did fish this area were rewarded with some quality fish. Other areas upstream of Tongue Point were also producing some fish but still have yet to become consistent. Anchovies are still producing best in the deep water while shrimp produce best in shallow.

Downriver, anglers launching from Hammond have been targeting keepers on lower Desdemona Sands and along the green line from Warrenton to Hammond. Tides are finally starting to weaken after a long series of minus tides that drove many anglers mad with excess debris fouling lines. At some points of the tide, it was inescapable and crab and sculpin have moved in to compete for baits. The pattern has been to hop-scotch downstream as the tide runs out and just wait out the tide change as those fish are also likely to respond to baits after the tide starts running again. You'll just have to decide if you want to effectively fish, you'll have to keep baits on your hooks to keep interested fish in the vicinity. In other words, you'll be sacrificing baits to the trash fish and crab.

Anglers are finding a mix of feed in the bellies of these fish but it's pretty clear to me that anchovies are not high on a sturgeon diet right now. Most of the keepers we have retained have varying degrees of shrimp or krill in their bellies. Shrimp that are similar in size and color to the ones we find clinging to the vegetation that we are continually picking from our lines on outgoing tide. It's only rarely that I find a full belly and it's clear that these fish are not as robust as they normally are this time of year. They certainly seem present however if our fish finders are accurate. It's plain and simple, like trout fishing, you have to match the hatch. With the water so cold, anchovies and other baitfish have yet to enter the river so the sturgeon are not keyed in on them. We just not sure when this is going to change. Unexplainable to me however is the lack of response we are witnessing for sand shrimp spots that normally produce well. It just may be that the water remains too cold for sand shrimp to get active and therefore provide a reliable food source for sturgeon as well.

Not much else was fun to fish for over the weekend as heavy winds and foul weather kept boats inland with the exception of Sunday. Some recreational boats ventured outside to target Chinook which have been showing up in small numbers for trollers working spoons in 40 to 90 feet of water going down and fishing in the bottom 10 feet of the water column. I am not sure why these fish respond to spoons so readily and why anglers are more reluctant to work bait for these fish this time of year.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon fishing will remain the top target for most NW sportanglers for the next several weeks. A weather change is needed. Cold, high water will likely remain a constant but hopefully, sturgeon will better acclimate and maybe even baitfish will be drawn into the river. Simply put, these fish are not feeding and without a reliable food source they likely will continue to be a struggle to catch.

In the meantime, it will be rather routine with the green line and lower Desdemona the likely producers over the weekend. Fish seem to be scattering a bit more and some of the more obscure spots are beginning to produce a few fish. It'll be a risk however to stray away from the pack if you really want to produce some keepers for your party.

Keep in mind, we're running into weaker tides this week so if flows remain high due to snowmelt, and spill keeps coming from upstream impoundments, the incoming tide will be negated by downstream run-off. This makes the outgoing tide time-frame ever more important to take advantage of.

Wind chop looks like it's going to be a factor for ocean goers this weekend. Sunday looks to be the best day to venture out but that can always change. Chinook will be the primary target but bottomfishing will be an option too. Be careful to read the regulations as they are complicated this year. Chinook fishing is only open north of Cape Falcon right now.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Willamette flows are moderating but the water level of the lower river remains high with the Columbia backing up into the mouth. Shad fishing has started and summer steelhead are available. Sturgeon may be retained on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays although catches of legal-sized fish have been few. Summer steelhead counts have exceeded those of this time last year by about 25%.

Yamhill County scored a grant from the Marine Board which, combined with available cash and contributions from the county, will cover the cost of upgrades including additional lighting and security cameras to Roger's Landing on the Willamette. The three-lane boat ramp is one of the most-trafficked launch on the river.

While the level and flow of the McKenzie River has moderated over the past week, water temperatures have remained in the mid-40s. Warm weather this week should result in a continuation of the drop and should warm the water.

High, cold water is hampering angler efforts on the Santiams. Conditions are such that all but very experienced boaters are discouraged from launching. Another 178 summer steelhead were trucked downstream from the Foster Dam trap on the South Santiam to allow anglers another shot at them.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Shad fishing is slow but improving at Oregon City. A few have been taken at Coon Island and the boat ramp at Gilbert River has been cleaned of woody debris. Go get 'em. No improvement is expected to occur with sturgeon, but those trying should take a variety of bait and move to find larger fish.

While the lower McKenzie has been fishing fairly well, improving conditions will turn on the trout. If the Middle Fork experiences a drop, fishing should be very good with Goldeneye and Caddisflies hatching. Rainbows and native cuts will feast. Steelhead fishing should be a good bet this weekend below Dexter Dam.

Most of those summer steelhead which are streaming over Willamette Falls are destined for the Santiam system. Water remains high in the North Santiam, so much so that the majority of boaters signed up for the 'Learn the River' drift last Saturday took a pass for a later date. Fishing is challenging in high, cold water although numbers are very good. The South Santiam also remains very high and is flowing swiftly although the water is clear. It's tough fishing here although the entire system is expected to drop with water temperatures rising over the next couple of weeks.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas mid-40 degree range as level dropped below 14 feet at Estacada Thursday, June 12th. While fishing for summers and spring

Chinook has been slow this year, the cold water is expected to extend the season further into the year than normal. The best is yet to come as the water drops and warms up a little.

The Sandy River has the appearance of a decent fishery with decent level and color. Cold water still has an icy grip and has resulted in few hookups with the exception of a decent summer steelhead bite occasionally below the hatchery. With an improvement in water temperatures, the Sandy will start producing spring Chinook.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Folks are still fishing for spring Chinook on Tillamook Bay and finding sporadic success. Driftboating should have been productive following the recent rain freshet last week. Although levels did not go very high, with the prolonged low water the 1-foot rise in river level flooded the river with anxious returning adults. It's not all that often that we get a June rain freshet so it's a welcome sight to salmon on the run.

Levels are on the drop again which should favor bank anglers. Salmon should hunker down in deeper holes and steelhead should be available on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. The rivers were at a great height at mid-week and dropping. The lower stretches should hold the best numbers for weekend anglers.

Reports of fair to good sturgeon fishing are still coming from Tillamook Bay. Although I don't have confirmed success, it's likely the best action is coming from the south and middle channels. Shrimp would be the bait of choice.

Offshore forecast is as follows:

**FRI** N WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. W SWELL 3 FT.

**FRI NIGHT** N WIND 20 TO 25 KT...EASING TO 15 TO 20 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 5 FT. NW SWELL 5 FT.

**SAT** N WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT.

**SAT NIGHT** N WIND 20 TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES 5 FT. NW SWELL 5 FT.

**SUN** N WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT.

**MON** NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. SW SWELL 5 FT.

It looks a bit windy to be having too much fun out there.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Softer tides will make jetty trolling the best option for a later season springer on Tillamook Bay. It's starting to get a bit late for high expectations for hatchery fish but there should be some available from the jetty to the hatcheries. Use herring along the jetty in Tillamook Bay targeting the deep running salmon the last 3 hours of outgoing tide.

Driftboaters will find a clearing river with some weekend traffic but fish should be susceptible to plugs and backbounced bait in the deeper holes. The Wilson, Trask and Nestucca should all be equal bets. If you want to target steelhead, the traditional haunts at lower water levels should produce some opportunities on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

It's not a great week to target sturgeon but anglers could work the bottom of the outgoing tide in the south channel. The last time I fished sturgeon (a few weeks ago), I had trouble with crab so you may find yourself moving quite a bit or bring lots of bait.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore angling for bottom fish and all-depth halibut (that's either/or, not both on the same trip) is expected to be great, if, that is, prevailing winds allow safe crossing. Seas are predicted to be friendly enough but warm weather inshore is forecast to cause very breezy conditions on the central coast. Conditions improve as one travels further south, with Charleston and Gold Beach looking promising for the weekend. Some of our favorite wind/wave resources can be found this week in Random Links, below.

Mild tides will favor crabbing although it has been poor in bays and estuaries, fair offshore. An exception has been out of Charleston in Coos Bay where crabbing has been fair.

Anglers have continued to make fair catches of sea-run cutthroat trout in tidewater where bait is allowed but upstream which is restricted to artificial lures only, has been slow.

Spring Chinook are being taken in the North Umpqua which has remained fairly fishable. Smallmouth bass catches are good and improving on the South Umpqua as flows moderate and water temperatures rise. Despite shad starting to show in decent numbers on the main Umpqua, high flows are hampering anglers in their attempt to take them. Smallies are starting to bite on the mainstem as well. Anglers in the estuary have had some success with sturgeon recently but catches are only fair.

Spring Chinook seem to be charging through the Grants Pass stretch of the Rogue River, making the upper and lower Rogue best choices for this weekend, although, in this case, 'best' doesn't necessarily equal 'good.' Fishing has been slow to fair with springers scattered. In the lower Rogue, plunkers are taking only the occasional springer while boats are doing marginally better. Upstream, there has been a flurry of activity

'first thing in the morning. Despite a surge in spring Chinook counts during the first week of June, low numbers of wild fish resulted in a restriction to hatchery-only retention through July 11th. A few springers are being taken on the upper river but the main draw at this time is an abundance of hatchery steelhead.

Surf fishing has continued to reliably produce limits pinkfin and striped perch off southwest beaches. The last two hours of an incoming tide are the most productive for these tasty fishes.

When conditions allow safe crossing, most boat anglers are scoring limits of rockfish with a variety of species showing in catches. Fish are responding equally well to bait or lure Large cabezon and ling cod are in the mix although this bounty is seeing little pressure with high gas prices keeping fishers at home.

A proposal is being considered to open a limited fishery for yellowtail rockfish which are only available outside the 40-fathom line. If adopted, the possibility of a more-liberal rockfish limit would boost participation and tourism income for coastal communities. Stay tuned.

Sea-run cutthroat fishing in the Chetco is expected to improve as the water temperature rises later in the month.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – The Salmonfly hatch on the Deschutes is peaking which may make finding a campsite this weekend a challenge. Bugs are thickest around Warm Springs where Stoneflies are in the mix. Nymphing the edges have been most effective. While flows remain a little high, the river is stable at this time. Sherars Falls has been kicking out a few springers to anglers.

The Salmonfly hatch has peaking on the Metolius with trout keyed on them providing some of the best fishing if the year on this challenging river.

**Northwest Trout** – Detroit Reservoir will receive 12,000 legal-sized trout this week, bringing the total to over 90,000 trout planted since the second week in April.

Diamond Lake will be planted with 200,000 fingerling rainbows this week. A similar planting in 2007 resulted in 11-inch trout by November. There are still hundreds if not thousands of large, fat trout available for the taking right now.

A youth fishing event hosted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on will take place on Saturday, June 14 from 9:30 AM to 3 PM at Century Pond southwest of Bend. Anglers 17 and younger are invited to attend. The department will provide tackle and bait for use by young anglers who do not have their own fishing equipment and staff and volunteers will help participants learn how to bait a hook, cast a rod and land the catch. About 400 legal-sized and 175 trophy-sized rainbows will be stocked for the event.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report June 11<sup>th</sup> – June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Spring fishing seasons are winding down in the region, but saltwater anglers still have their pick of **halibut**, **lingcod** or **shrimp** fisheries during the next few weeks. In the freshwater, anglers can cast for trout, and soon will have an opportunity to turn their attention to **chinook salmon**.

Portions of the Skagit, Cascade and Skykomish rivers open for **chinook salmon** fishing June 1, said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. The Skagit will open to hatchery chinook retention from the Highway 530 bridge at Rockport to the Cascade River. On the Cascade, anglers will be allowed to fish from the mouth of the river to the Rockport-Cascade Road Bridge. Both stretches are open through July 15.

The daily limit on the Skagit and Cascade rivers will be four hatchery chinook, two of which may be adults (chinook salmon at least 24 inches in length). Barkdull reminds anglers that statewide rules require anglers to stop fishing for salmon once they have kept two adults.

On the Skykomish, hatchery chinook fishing is open from the Lewis Street Bridge in Monroe to the Wallace River through July 31. Anglers fishing the Skykomish will have a daily limit of two hatchery chinook salmon.

**Trout** fishing also will open at several of the region's rivers and streams beginning June 1. Under the statewide rule for trout, there is a two-fish daily limit and a minimum size of eight inches in rivers and streams. However, some of the region's rivers and streams have a rule requiring trout to be at least 14 inches in length to keep. For more rules and details, anglers can check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Out on the saltwater, the northern portion of Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) opens June 1 to catch-and-release fishing for **salmon**. Fishing will be allowed north of a line from Point Monroe to Meadow Point. Handling rules are in effect for this fishery.

Meanwhile, time is running out to hook a **lingcod**. The fishery runs through June 15 in the region, where fishing has been decent for lings recently. Catch counts at the Armeni ramp indicate 31 anglers hauled in nine lingcod May 24, and 13 anglers checked three lings the following day. Elsewhere, 42 anglers at the Everett ramp brought home seven lingcod May 25, while 69 anglers checked at the Coronet Bay public ramp caught nine. During the hook-and-line season (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit for lings, with a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches.

The **halibut** fishery is winding down as well. The season for the big flatfish is open through June 13. Until the fishery closes, anglers can fish five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Rather drop a pot? The region's **spot shrimp** fishery is limited to the southern portion of Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) and is scheduled to close May 31. However, shrimpers can soon fish for **coonstripe** and **pink shrimp** in some marine areas, beginning June 1. For details on shrimp fisheries check WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all saltwater and freshwater fisheries in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

**UPDATE: (06/03/08) The Hood Canal shrimp season will open for one final day June 11 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.**

The ocean **salmon** season begins June 1 off the south coast, where fishing off Westport and Ilwaco will get under way a full month earlier than usual. Also that day, salmon fishing opens in Marine Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) in southern Puget Sound. Then, on June 3, the north coast opens to salmon fishing off LaPush and Neah Bay.

At the same time, fishers will have an array of other options to consider, including **halibut** fishing off the north coast, **shrimping** in Hood Canal and - starting June 18 - **crabbing** in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca.

"People definitely have plenty of options in terms of how they spend their free time over the next few weeks," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW biologist. "Regardless of where they live in the region, they shouldn't have to go far to catch fish or shellfish."

The early start for this year's ocean salmon season is designed to give anglers an opportunity to catch hatchery **chinook salmon** off the coast before the bulk of the coho run arrives, said Doug Milward, WDFW ocean salmon manager. With conservation measures in place for coho throughout the West Coast, the June opening will give anglers a chance to catch up to 20,000 chinook while minimizing impacts on coho, he said.

"We could actually have a pretty good chinook fishery in June," Milward said. "There will also be a season in July, but there's a good chance we'll have to close the fishery earlier than in previous years to meet conservation goals for coho salmon."

Salmon fishing in Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) opens June 1, seven days per week. Marine Area 2 (Westport) also opens June 1, but fishing is restricted to Sundays through Thursdays. On the north coast, fishing opens June 3 in marine areas 3 and 4 (LaPush and Neah Bay) five days per week, Tuesdays through Saturdays.

In Puget Sound, Marine Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) also will open June 1 seven days a week, joining Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound), which opened May 1.

Additional fishing regulations, including minimum size limits and area catch guidelines are described in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet, available online at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs\\_seasons.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html).

Meanwhile, north coast **halibut** anglers will get two more days of fishing May 29 and 31 at La Push and Neah Bay (marine areas 3 and 4). These areas will reopen June 17 and 19 with fishing restricted to waters no more than 30 fathoms deep, as specified in the 2008-09 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will remain open through July 21, Thursdays through Mondays only.

Farther east along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, sunny weather brought out hundreds of halibut fishers during the May 24 weekend where fishing was good until the seas got choppy. Nearly 800 participants in the 8th annual Port Angeles Halibut Derby caught more than 100 fish, with the first-prize winner earning \$5,000 for landing a 180-pounder. This area (Marina Area 6), as well as the rest of Puget Sound, will close to halibut fishing June 13. These fisheries are also open Thursdays through Mondays only.

For **shrimp** anglers, fishing will reopen in Hood Canal for two more days May 29 and 31. In the Tacoma area, Marine Area 11 will reopen for non-spot shrimp June 1, with a 150-foot maximum fishing depth restriction. For more information, anglers can check online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>, or call the Shellfish Hotline at 1-866-880-5431.

Looking forward to **crab** fishing? The popular recreational fishery opens June 18 seven days a week in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca (marine areas 4 and 5) and southern Puget Sound (Marine Area 13). Most other marine areas will open July 2 on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule, although some waters north of Anacortes will not open until later in summer.

Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/crabindex> or <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Poor visibility from snowmelt continues to limit the sport fishing opportunity for spring chinook in the Sol Duc River, said Mike Gross, WDFW fish biologist. Returns to the hatchery are trailing the numbers seen in recent years by this time, though it is still early. "Hopefully the fishing will pick up as we get into June." Gross said. He reminds anglers that all unmarked, wild fish must be released.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Anglers are still picking up **spring chinook** in a number of area rivers, but interest in fisheries for **sturgeon, shad, hatchery steelhead, trout,** and **bass** is increasing. On May 24, an aerial

survey team counted 411 boats fishing the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam for sturgeon and 275 bank anglers fishing for shad.

Boat anglers surveyed at the Deep River and Knappton ramps averaged one legal-size **sturgeon** for every six rods that week - up slightly from last year. According to those surveyed, half of the fish they hooked were keepers. Bank anglers also caught some legal-size sturgeon between Knappton and Chinook, as did boat and bank anglers fishing upriver to Marker 85 and in the Bonneville Pool.

"The water is warming up and the bite is improving," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "There's a good reason why more boats and anglers are fishing for sturgeon."

Hymer reminds anglers that a legal-size sturgeon caught between Buoy 10 and the Wauna powerlines must measure 45 to 60 inches from the tip of the fish's nose to the tip of its tail. From the Wauna powerlines upriver to Marker #85, sturgeon may be retained if they measure 42 to 60 inches - but only if they are caught Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

That size limit also applies from Bonneville Dam to The Dalles Dam, where sturgeon may be retained seven days per week.

Anglers fishing for **shad**, on the other hand, don't have to worry about either size limits or daily catch limits. Although this year's shad run has been slow to arrive, more than 10,000 passed Bonneville Dam on May 25, which Hymer sees as a sign of better fishing in the days ahead.

"Shad fishing should pick up in a couple of weeks," he said. "These fish weigh three to four pounds apiece and put up a good fight, so it's not surprising that more anglers are fishing for them." Tips on catching and preparing shad are posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/outreach/fishing/shad/shad.htm>.

Meanwhile, anglers continue to reel in **spring chinook salmon** and **hatchery steelhead** from tributaries to the Columbia River above and below Bonneville Dam. On the mainstem Columbia, however, steelhead retention below the I-5 Bridge remains closed - as do all mainstem salmonid fisheries - to conserve upriver spring chinook.

The best bet for spring chinook in recent weeks has been Drano Lake, where boat anglers have been averaging a springer - including jacks - for every three rods. Also good is the Wind River, where boat anglers have been averaging a spring chinook salmon for every four rods. Bank anglers have also been catching some fish at the mouth of the Wind and in the gorge. Fishing in the upper river should continue to improve as more fish return to Carson National Fish Hatchery, Hymer said.

On the North Fork Lewis River, anglers fishing under a three-steelhead daily limit have been catching equal numbers of hatchery steelhead and spring chinook. Some are also finding steelhead on the Cowlitz River, where the limit switches June 1 from three hatchery steelhead per day to five trout - including three hatchery steelhead over 20 inches - from the Highway 4 Bridge at Kelso upstream to Mayfield Dam. All chinook salmon must be released on the Cowlitz River from the mouth upstream to the boundary markers below Mayfield Dam due to a shortfall in hatchery returns. The same is true from the mouth of the Kalama River upstream to the upper salmon hatchery.

Portions of several other rivers will open to fishing for hatchery steelhead June 1, including the Elochoman, Toutle and Green (in Cowlitz County) rivers, and bait may be used in the East Fork Lewis and Washougal rivers. In addition, Lake Scanewa (Cowlitz Falls Reservoir) will open for

hatchery spring chinook and hatchery rainbow trout starting June 1. Anglers are advised to check the Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information about those fisheries.

Boat anglers fishing the Bonneville Pool averaged over 12 **bass** per rod, including fish released during the week ending May 25. **Trout** anglers should be aware that several lakes in the region were stocked that week. They include:

- Merrill Lake in Cowlitz County (May 21) - 224 triploid rainbows, averaging 1.4 pounds each.
- Swift Reservoir (May 24) - 60,418 half-pound rainbows May 21.
- Battleground Lake (May 20) - 4,000 three-quarter pound rainbows.

News that this year's **shad** run is late to arrive (see above) may come as a surprise to anyone who has looked through the fish-viewing windows at Bonneville Dam lately. On May 25, nearly 11,000 of them - most weighing 3 to 5 pounds - were counted at the dam, far exceeding the number of all other species passing up the fish ladder combined. If the past is any indication, the parade of shad past the fish window will grow to 70,000 or 80,000 per day.

While sometimes considered the Rodney Dangerfield of fish ("they don't get no respect"), shad actually have a very colorful history. Averaging three to five pounds, shad are credited with sustaining General George Washington's troops at Valley Forge during the War of Independence. In 1871, an entrepreneur named Seth Green loaded 12,000 young shad from the Atlantic coast into milk cans and transported them to Sacramento to start a new fishery. The fish thrived and began showing up in the Columbia River a decade later.

Shad are the largest members of the herring family, which also includes Pacific sardines. Their backs are metallic blue to green in color, their bellies white with a saw-like serrated edge along the midline. Like salmon, shad are anadromous, entering freshwater rivers to spawn. Unlike salmon, they do not necessarily die after spawn and many return to spawn annually. Females bear more than 50,000 eggs, sometimes as many as several hundred thousand.

Shad will be on display through June at the Bonneville fish-viewing window at the Washington Shore Visitor Complex. To get there, take Washington State Highway 14 east to Milepost 40 (about 5 miles from Stevenson) and turn into the Bonneville Dam visitor center. The visitor center is the glass building at the end of the powerhouse.

#### **Eastern Washington:**

Rivers and streams will open to fishing June 1 throughout the region, but Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, warns anglers that high water and flooding from recent snow pack melt makes it not only dangerous, but tough to fish.

"Some of the smaller streams and tributaries of larger rivers are probably okay to reach and be productive," Donley said. "But the best stream fishing is yet to come, when flows settle and slow a little more. It basically means there will be good fishing longer through the summer this year."

Donley noted that Spokane area **trout** lakes are "really rolling" now. "Badger has some nice west slope cutthroat," he said. "Amber and West Medical are producing nice rainbows. Fish Lake has tiger trout. Rock Lake has nice browns and rainbows. All of our trout-stocked waters in this district are producing."

WDFW enforcement officer Lenny Hahn's recent patrols revealed the same. "Most fishermen had three or four trout on their stringers at Badger, West Medical, and Fish lakes," Hahn reported. "Fishermen trolling leaded line with a fly are catching browns at Clear Lake. Fishtrap is good, too, but seemed a little slower."

Donley also noted Bonnie Lake's panfish coming on, as are Downs Lake's **perch** and **bass**. "Once Long Lake (Spokane River reservoir) stabilizes it will have good **crappie** fishing," he said.

"It's really just that time of year when you can't help but catch fish," Donley said.

WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff says fishing in Okanogan County has picked up in recent weeks due to warming water temperatures and increased fish productivity.

"Anglers can do well on Leader Lake for **bluegills** and **crappies** and on Patterson Lake for **perch**," Jateff said. "The Okanogan River and Palmer Lake are good bets for **smallmouth bass** and Whitestone Lake is a good producer of **largemouth bass**."

Jateff reminds anglers that new regulations for smallmouth bass went into effect May 1 - no minimum size, daily limit of 10, but only one over 14 inches may be retained.

Jateff also noted that **trout** waters such as Conconully Reservoir, Conconully Lake, Pearrygin, Spectacle, Wannacut, and Alta lakes should continue to provide good fishing for rainbows in the 10- to 12-inch range with carryover fish up to 15 inches.

Selective gear waters, such as Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, Rat Lake near Brewster, and Davis Lake near Winthrop, are all providing good fishing for rainbow. Blue and Rat lakes are also producing catches of brown trout.

**Kokanee** fishing has also improved. Palmer and Bonaparte lakes are the best bets for anglers looking to hook fish in the 10- to 13-inch range.

### **South Central Washington:**

River and stream flows remain high throughout the region, making some fishing slow and access potentially dangerous. Yakima River flow data is available from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/yakima/>.

Yakima River **salmon** anglers can check Prosser and Roza Dam chinook counts at <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html>, although posted counts are often a few days behind. Yakima River salmon fishing is scheduled to close May 31; if the season is extended, based on returning fish numbers and harvest to date, it will be posted at WDFW's Fishing Emergency Rule Updates and News webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Information on water access sites for the lower Yakima River, including new or recently improved boat launches, are available at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon/when\\_where\\_best\\_area-yakima.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon/when_where_best_area-yakima.htm).

Lost, McDaniels, and Bear lakes in Yakima County were just stocked with trout. Dog and Leech lakes remain inaccessible for stocking. Clear Lake continues to produce trout catches. Lower elevation fishing waters also remain productive, with continued stocking of eight to 12-inch hatchery rainbows. For all trout stocking details, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm>.

## **Reader Email -**

Got a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

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## **Random Links**

State Declares Rogue River Navigable To Lost Creek Dam:

<http://news.opb.org/article/2301-state-declares-rogue-river-navigable-lost-creek-dam/>

Wind and wave forecasts:

<http://www.wetsand.com/swellwatch/swellwatch.asp?catid=292&tabid=438&TideCode=NWOB>

<http://magicseaweed.com/Oregon-Surf-Forecast/15/>

A new one (in Beta): <http://swellwatch.wetsand.com/>

**Weekly Quote** – "Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery elements are made for wise men to contemplate and for fools to pass without consideration."- Izaak Walton

**GOOD LUCK!**