

[The Guide's Forecast - volume 17 issue number 8](#)

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 20<sup>th</sup> – February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

### **Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – Anglers anxiously await more spring chinook news and plunkers as well as boaters ply the waters in hopes of an early prize. The season's first spring chinook made itself visible at Bonneville Dam on February 8<sup>th</sup>. The mainstem Columbia season is *projected* to run through April 10<sup>th</sup>.

Lower Willamette sturgeon fishing is slower this week than last. Herring and squid are still taking fish but so is smelt. Following high water, there may be some spring Chinook action in the near future. We'll let you know when it happens.

McKenzie River level and flow are conducive to fishing but catch-and-release trout fishing here has been slow.

The Santiam system is in decent shape but there haven't been sufficient numbers of winter steelhead over Willamette Falls to create a fishery here yet.

**Northwest** – Early indications following the high water indicates that there are good numbers of steelhead around and as expected, a number of spent fish with some fresh wild fish available too. With larger, more productive rivers just coming on line at this writing, we won't know more until the next issue but check the Forecast section for the region you'll be fishing in for an accurate assessment of what lies ahead for your favorite stream. This is in the paid member's only section.

The Wilson and Nestucca as well as the Siletz will remain top options for those seeking hatchery fish options. Wild steelhead should be available in nearly every system.

Rough weather kept recreational boats at bay for the week but conditions may improve by the weekend. Rockfish and lingcod await anglers.

Crabbing remains poor both in the ocean and local estuaries. It's clearly a down-cycle for the crustaceans.

**Southwest**- Offshore conditions are forecast to be favorable through the weekend and into the coming week for those looking to launch for ocean bottom fishing or crabbing.

While boats out of Depoe Bay and Newport are regularly scoring limits of ling cod, catches of rockfish have slowed somewhat.

Surf perch fishing has been worthwhile at various south coast beaches including those around Coos Bay, Bandon and Gold Beach.

The Reedsport Fly-fishing Expo, sponsored by the Lower Umpqua Fly-casters will be on Saturday, February 28th from 9 AM to 3 PM at the Reedsport Charter School. A dozen tyers will give demonstrations, a film will be shown and door prizes are available. A pretty good deal since admission is free.

Crabbing has been poor at Winchester Bay as it is still suffering from turbidity from rain last week.

Coos Bay crabbers are starting to score once again now that the waters are recovering from last week's

storms.

Catches of winter steelhead are good on the lower and middle Rogue River. Winters are into the upper river as well and are being caught in fair to good number now.

Steelheading has slowed on the Chetco River with waters dropping low and turning clear.

**Eastern** – Crescent Lake is producing Mackinaw trout for trollers using downriggers.

Trollers at Green Peter have been picking up a few kokanee but they have been running small.

**SW Washington-** District steelheaders remain less than motivated although streams are just now coming into shape. The Cowlitz will remain a top option until spring chinook arrive but the North Fork Lewis and Kalama will also get some pressure. The early season return proved much better than last year's return.

Smelt dippers most often took limits during the last open season on Saturday. The final opener for the Cowlitz will be this Saturday and dipping will likely remain good. No license is required to catch these fish but you do have to adhere to a 10-pound limit, which is about ¼ of a 5 gallon bucket full.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – No news is bad news. Nothing continuing to go on here although the first spring chinook of the year passed by Bonneville Dam on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Let's hope we get some momentum going in the very near future.

**The Guide's Forecast** – If the weather continues to warm and a dry winter ensues, there could be an early spurt of salmon into the Columbia River by early March. Most fish in the system now are destined for the Willamette and conditions on the Willamette should continue to improve. We're on a bigger tide swing this week so plunkers do have a reasonable chance for a salmon or steelhead by the weekend. You do have to keep in mind however that it's still mid-February, still 6 weeks away from much better fishing.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Flows of the Willamette at the Falls have been moderating and the water has been clearing. The latest temperature reading was right at 50 degrees as of February 19<sup>th</sup>. Daily counts of winter steelhead have been ramping up into the hundreds, putting the latest total about 2,150.

Waters of the McKenzie River crested on February 8<sup>th</sup> and have been steadily dropping and clearing since that date. Currently flowing 3,200 cfs at Vida, it is in good condition for fishing.

The North Santiam is in fine condition with flows at 2,000 cfs at Mehama which is considered quite fishable.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing remains the closest to a sure thing in fishing although the bite around popular spots such as St. Johns, Milwaukie and Swan Island has slowed. One stretch that has heated up is that near the entrance to Multnomah Channel. While herring and squid are still getting bit, smelt is becoming the bait of choice now that they're running on the Columbia. Spring Chinook fishing has become a hit or miss proposition because there's good news on the horizon. "We'll be hearing of springer hookups as the Willamette drops and clears after it has been high." says **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**. "There should be several caught - not just one here or there - in the next few days. This is part of a pilot run that we'll often see in February."

Trout fishing has been slow on the McKenzie but a few fly anglers are trying it as an alternative to crowded rivers.

The ODFW reported that a "few dozen winter steelhead" have entered the lower North Santiam and while that's good news, that's darned few fish to hunt over the stretch of an entire river. This system can provide decent catch-and-release action for wild fish (all steelhead above Willamette Falls are unclipped), it will be a few months before it is truly worthwhile. The South Santiam receives some upper river native steelhead as well.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Clackamas River was still a little high a murky on Tuesday this week though turning green. It's running a nice color as of Thursday, February 19th, and is at a decent level.

Sandy water levels are fairly low now but the river is in good condition for steelheading. As the river level has dropped, steelhead catches have picked up.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Clackamas steelheaders will find a mix of hatchery and wild fish now. "Since the high water, steelhead have moved upstream, thinning out numbers in the lower river," according to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** who went on to say, "Fish are scattered now with the lower river spotty, try upriver where steelheaders are catching more winters." TGF got a report of a number of fish taken at McIver recently and that live sand shrimp has been the hot bait this week.

"The Sandy has been a bright spot," reported **Robert**, "they are catching a lot of broodstock but they're also hooking a lot of wild fish. Keep in mind that after that rain we got, fish are scattered." Lures to try on the Sandy if you go include the pink plastic worm and bobber and jig, the latter of which produced three for three for an angler this week. Campbell also had this to say, "This river will have two rock-solid months of winter steelheading. Plus, I saw two fresh summer steelhead from the Clack this week, which isn't unusual for late February. They were beautiful, chrome-bright fish."

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Coming off of the previous week's rain freshet, north coast rivers fished fairly well last weekend and even a bit before. Troops went out in droves, given the early season success most had witnessed with fair catches coming from all the expected favorites. With only the Nestucca and Wilson left as quality hatchery fish options, you can guess where the crowds gravitated to.

Smaller streams fished fair prior to the above mentioned hatchery options but anglers predictably found wild fish and hatchery spent down streamers. Most of those early season producers are done now with skittish fish present (mostly wild) and no more hatchery fish on the way. As low as they got by the weekend, no one is floating them but bank anglers are still plying the reaches they have access to. It looks like it will be a while before another rain freshet rolls through.

Even the larger streams are getting on the low and clear side now, making the mainstem Nehalem one of the more attractive options right now. Reports are scarce from this wild fish only system and fly-fishers are starting to have better access to wild fish that are now present in better numbers. Overall, most north coast systems are lacking biters and interest right now and we're still a few weeks away from more consistent fishing. There are however, some recent reports of successful anglers catching sizable fish on the Wilson River, some of hatchery origin. Reports of a guide boat taking a 17-pounder came this week, just 1 of the 4-fish limit that guide took targeting fish in these clearing conditions. Another report of a 22-pound hatchery broodstock steelhead also came from the Wilson last weekend. Some guides are reporting a nice representation of larger, 3-salt fish ranging above 11 or 12 pounds. A good sign that we have had back-to-back healthy returns of adults. Recent reports from the Trask and Nestucca also point

to great fishing following the last significant rain freshet late last week. On systems that offer the late broodstock option (Wilson & Nestucca), there is a nice mix of wild and hatchery fish.

Looking to the west, offshore weather is attracting bottomfishers to take advantage of willing sea bass and lingcod. Garibaldi and Depoe Bay are the most attractive north coast options with Pacific City also a good one. Anglers also have deep reef options although most are sticking to the nearshore to take advantage of ample sea bass numbers. The south jetty out of Astoria is a poor option with a high tide exchange creating little opportunity for jiggers.

Razor clam diggers were plenty impressed with the digging success rates over the weekend. Those that participated reported 10 minute limits as it is clear the clams were needing to feed! With such a prolonged period of high surf, these clams took advantage of calm seas to filter feed on plankton. A good grade of clams wasn't the norm but who can complain about a 10 minute limit?

Crabbing remains poor in both estuaries and big blue.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With no rain in sight, it may be more of a saltwater show versus freshwater steelheading. Couple water conditions up with the fact we're still a few weeks away from peak season and it may give you a chance to mow the lawn this week.....or go fishing!

Larger streams will be the focus of what little effort may be out there for this week. Savvy steelheaders will keep their eyes on the lower reaches of the Wilson, Nestucca for hatchery broodstock fish and the mainstem Nehalem and lower Trask for fresh run wild fish. This may be a week to employ plug pulling. Regardless, you'll be looking for tidal fish so play your launch time around high tide, fishing 2 hours before and at least 2 hours after. Here's the river by river breakdown for this weekend:

Necanicum River – Almost too low for even bank anglers to effectively fish but if you target pocket water, you could take fish, especially in the early morning. You'll find a mix of some fresh wild steelhead and a horde of spent ones. The spent ones should bite rather readily if you fish the deeper water.

Mainstem Nehalem – This should be the best option on the coast and fish should be well distributed throughout. Tidal fish should find their way into the lower reaches following a high tide so don't overlook those options but you'll be fishing on wild fish so prepare for catch and release fishing. There should be some brutes in this system by now however.

Kilchis River- Too low to float, there may be some fish in the lower reaches if you play the tides right. There isn't much public bank access on the lower reaches of this system but bank anglers should be able to access the upper reaches of this system if they wish to pursue wild steelhead.

Wilson River – Still producing fair to good catches to savvy steelheaders, especially for drift-boaters working the lower reaches of this river. An early start is advisable and if you can work the water downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge, you stand a fair chance at fresh fish into the weekend. Although we're losing the minus tide series this weekend, tide exchanges will still be impressive with nearly 10 foot of exchanges happening on both tide cycles over the 24 hour period.

Trask River – Always the sleeper as it's primarily a wild fish fishery (catch and release). One boat that floated it the other day however, picked up 2, yes, 2, hatchery broodstock steelhead along with a handful of wild fish. These broodstock fish are raised at the Trask hatchery so of course there's going to be some straying into this watershed. The dropping flows should make plug pulling a good option into the weekend, especially if you're going to work the lower reaches downstream of Loren's Drift.

Three Rivers/Nestucca system – Like the Wilson, it's pretty clear by now that we're going to have a good run back to this basin this year as well. Some good catches have already been witnessed with peak

season still a few weeks away. Like other north coast systems, there should be good distribution of steelhead (both wild and broodstock hatchery) throughout the river system but fresh fish, more likely to bite, will be on the lower reaches of this system, certainly below 1<sup>st</sup> Bridge. Downstream of Three Rivers may be an even better bet. Again, plugs may be an effective tool as it's a technique you can employ without worry of spooking fish, say, versus sidedrifting. Also, fish simply become more territorial in lower flows.

Ocean goers should keep a close eye on the offshore weather. It's been pretty nice lately. You do however, have to keep an eye on how the tides play out for your bar crossings. If swells are forecast to be 4 foot or larger, a strong outgoing tide could cause trouble after your day is done (or before it happens). You'll likely continue to be disappointed when setting your crab gear. If you have access to fresh fish carcasses however, you may be pleasantly surprised. Here is the ocean forecast:

**FRI** NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT...EASING TO 5 TO 10 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

**FRI NIGHT** NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

**SAT** NE WIND 5 TO 10 KT. GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE MORNING. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 11 SECONDS.

**SAT NIGHT** NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT...RISING TO 15 TO 20 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 12 SECONDS.

**SUN** NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

**MON** NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

It looks like a friendly sea ahead, look out bottomfish!

Don't look to the estuaries to produce good crab catches either. First of all, it's been poor even on the weak tide series and it's a strong tide series this weekend. Don't waste your time.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore conditions are forecast to be favorable through the weekend and into the coming week for those looking to launch for ocean bottom fishing or crabbing.

While boats out of Depoe Bay and Newport are regularly scoring limits of ling cod, catches of rockfish have slowed somewhat.

Surf perch fishing has been worthwhile at various south coast beaches including those around Coos Bay, Bandon and Gold Beach.

Herring are being taken at Yaquina Bay but be aware that the coming weekend is the Seafood and Wine Festival in Newport so there will be thousands of folks that are in the area for that event.

The Reedsport Fly-fishing Expo, sponsored by the Lower Umpqua Flycasters will be on Saturday, February 28th from 9 AM to 3 PM at the Reedsport Charter School. A dozen tyers will give demonstrations, a film will be shown and door prizes are available. A pretty good deal since admission is free.

Crabbing has been poor at Winchester Bay as it is still suffering from turbidity from rain last week. The best option is to crab just outside the bar where catches have been fair to good. There have been a few

winter steelhead landed on the Umpqua mainstem bait fishers at Elkton. The South Umpqua is expected to be in good shape and fishing well for hatchery steelhead over the coming weekend.

Coos Bay crabbers are starting to score once again now that the waters are recovering from last week's storms although some off-color water is still evident. Best results may be expected near the jetties and bay entrance on the incoming tide. Rockfishing has resumed at the jetties.

After cresting six feet over flood stage last week, the lower Rogue has now dropped and cleared with steelhead a-plenty available. Currently flowing just over 5,800 cfs, small corkies and side-drifting is taking fish. While there have been no reports of spring Chinook, anglers have started to fish for them. The trap below the dam on the Applegate River has seen the earliest return of winter steelhead in 10 years. The middle Rogue has been fishing well this week for a mix of fresh and wild steelhead. The upper Rogue has been producing decent catches thanks to the recent freshet and an early run of winters this season. Fresh steelhead are entering the Cole Rivers Hatchery every day now.

Steelheading has slowed on the Chetco River with waters dropping low and turning clear. Plug-pullers are still getting a few and spinners have been effective recently. Expect to see some spawned-put fish in catches at this time of year.

The Elk and Sixes rivers are slow due to low, clear water.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Hatches of caddis and Blue-Winged-Olives are occurring on the Metolius but trout haven't been responding to them. Bug activity has been heavy one day, light the next. Fishing has been slow to fair.

Crescent Lake is producing Mackinaw trout for trollers using downriggers. These fish can often be spotted on depth finders holding below schools of kokanee.

Trout fishing on Fall River has been slow. This comes as no surprise to those who have tried it over the last couple of years as the general consensus is that the fish seem to have simply disappeared.

Fishing has been slow to spotty at Crooked River where flows have been erratic recently.

Fair to good catches of kokanee averaging 12 inches or better have been coming out of Detroit Reservoir for those trolling lures.

Trollers at Green Peter have been picking up a few kokanee but they have been running small.

### **Reader Emails: The Inbox**

Subscriber **Stevo** wrote this week to ask, "You know there's other fishing going on above Bonneville besides salmon fishing. Is this a fishing forecast or a salmon and steelhead forecast?"

TGF co-editor and pro guide Bob Rees replied, "Thanks for being a TGF subscriber! There is other fishing going on above Bonneville Dam. Besides some sturgeon fishing, which is fair at best, there is a steelhead fishery that can rear up this time of year. It's mostly wild fish as this report from the ODF&W recreation report indicates:

"The Dalles Pool (Columbia River between The Dalles Dam and John Day Dam):

"Weekly checking showed no catch for three bank anglers; and five unclipped steelhead released for two boats (six anglers).

"John Day Pool (Columbia River above John Day Dam and John Day Arm):

"Weekly checking showed no catch for 18 bank anglers.

"We'll pay closer attention to this in the upcoming weeks and report on it if it warrants additional print.

"Thanks again Stevo!"

Irregular TGF reporter **Kapt'n Ken Johnson** sent this in, which we share without comment as he always has plenty to say:

"Let me tell you a little story about Orcas aka Killer Whales...In the late 70's (1977 actually...) my buddy Mike and I "borrowed" a "not home" friend's 12' wood boat with a 5hp OLD Evinrude Outboard. We headed out to fish for Salmon in the Straits of Juan DeFuca out in the middle of nowhere actually. Especially in a 12' rickety leaking little OLD boat. We trolled and trolled and were catching Sand Shark of all things but no Chinook. Mike, having passed out (tired!) in the front of the boat sat up abruptly and screamed something out. I was on the tiller manning the motor when he SCREAMED out, and I quote..."SNAKE!!!!!" Of course I was confused because, well I mean, SNAKE??? WTF why did he yell SNAKE in a alarmed scary tone? I turned around as fast as I could and saw nothing! Absolutely nothing except the water was a touch swirly 50-or 60 feet behind the boat. About 2-3 seconds later I saw his "Snake." I knew what it was immediately and sat there in absolute awe. About 150' and closing fast, behind our tiny little boat was a pod of about 8-10 Orcas cruising through the Sound. Mostly adults but there were at least 2-3 juveniles with them. What Mike saw was the curved dorsal fin of one of the Orca's coming straight at us and honestly, if you woke up and saw something like that first thing it did appear somewhat like a BIG Black Snake...But, this snake had to be at least 6' long, or more, and swam faster than any snake I've seen in the water. Now, Mike is an educated fellah but we're both city slickers so totally not used to such a surprise...I mean, within a few seconds, this family of Orca's was upon us. Mike yelled to SPEED UP to get away, I assume, but I simply said "If they want us there's no way we can do anything about it..." as they closed in. I went into a state of awe and interest as this was the coolest thing I had ever seen. Long story short, about 20'-25' from our boat the Orca's turned just slightly to avoid colliding with us and swam past 25'-30' away. It was so beautiful I thought, and "What a way to go...Talk about being recycled!" They actually slowed way down as before they were swimming along at about 10-12 knots but slowed to about 2-4 knots as they passed. It was absolutely amazing. They slowed because they were checking us out as much as we were in awe and checking them out too. Their BIG Eyes turned toward us and they stared at us as they slowly passed by. We stared back. I never felt in danger or that we were on the menu that day but I certainly noticed how HUGE their Super White teeth were...I was speechless and NO, we didn't have a camera. This was way before cell phones digital cameras and the Kodak Instamatic was back at camp with our wives. It is something I will never forget and once Mike dried out his drawers, he was fine with it too...No, that part didn't happen...We were both blessed that day and wish we had a camera to prove it. Technology, these days, has made it so much easier to accomplish what we couldn't do back in the dark ages...lol Anyway, enjoy this short video from NPR--->"

[http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/01/19/378415964/paddle-boarder-who-wanted-to-see-orcas-gets-an-up-close-look?utm\\_campaign=storyshare&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_medium=social](http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/01/19/378415964/paddle-boarder-who-wanted-to-see-orcas-gets-an-up-close-look?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social)

#### **Write to the TGF staff:**

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#### **Random Links**

Trolling Tips for Rainbow Trout:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmwXzDk3Mgg>

Fly Tying Contest to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society:

<http://oregonflyfishingblog.com/2015/02/18/fly-tying-contest-to-benefit-leukemia-and-lymphoma-society/>

Become an ODFW volunteer fishing instructor:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2015/february/021315b.asp>

**GOOD LUCK!**