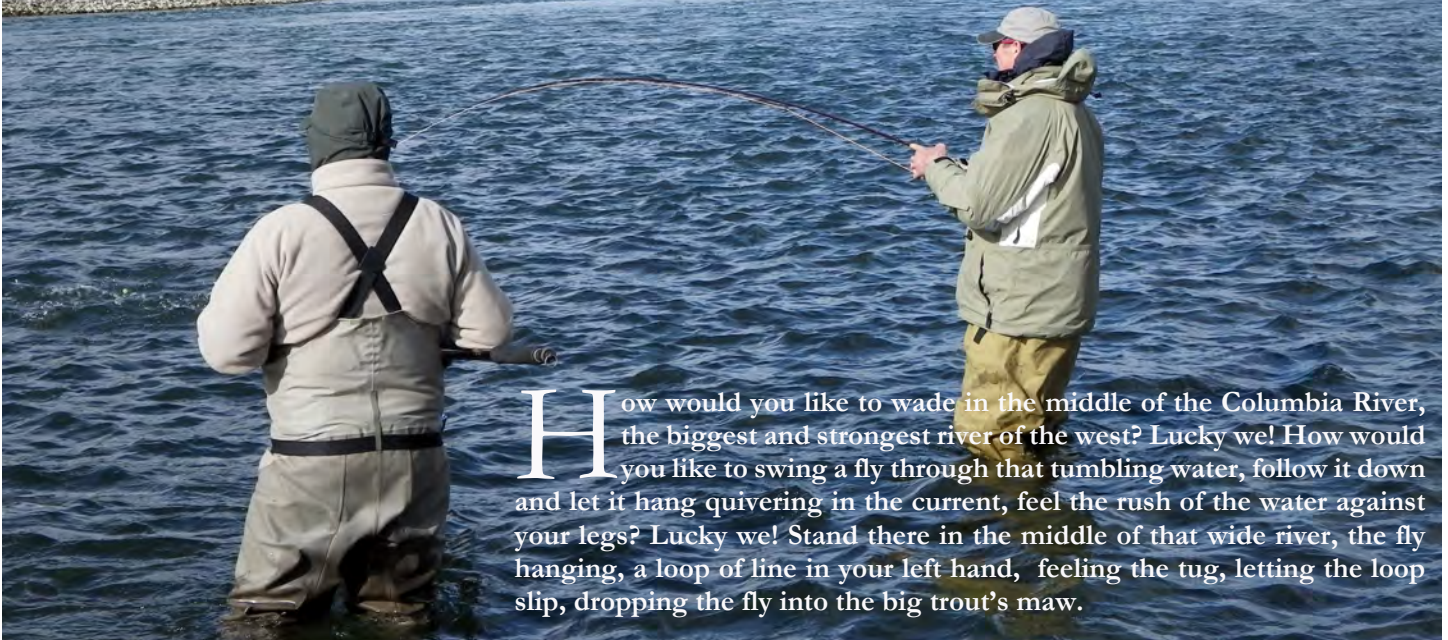


TIGHTLINES

Rainbow Wrangling on the Upper Columbia

by Keith Stamm



How would you like to wade in the middle of the Columbia River, the biggest and strongest river of the west? Lucky we! How would you like to swing a fly through that tumbling water, follow it down and let it hang quivering in the current, feel the rush of the water against your legs? Lucky we! Stand there in the middle of that wide river, the fly hanging, a loop of line in your left hand, feeling the tug, letting the loop slip, dropping the fly into the big trout's maw.



Lucky we! He's hooked, he's on, cart wheeling, tail walking, head shaking, the fly rod alive and bucking in your hands. Lucky we! How would you like to feel that trout on the end of your line, the guide excited, telling you, "That's a good fish, take your time." Lucky we! Bruce Johnson and Keith Stamm, OFFers celebrating spring on the Upper Columbia.

There are some places, some experiences that stick in the mind because they are the stuff of dreams, the fruit of your imagining. They lift you up onto a different plane. You are transported into your element, carried along by the river as if you'd become a trout yourself. *And there are some trout that are so magnificent, their marking so brilliant, their shape so perfectly formed, you look on them in awe.*

The Columbia River, the greatest river of the west, a gift from the Gods, passed down from eternity; one of the most special places on earth. We stood in her middle, embraced by her waters, not afraid, feeling caressed, feeling blessed. We were there because the Olympic Fly Fisher's auction offered the chance, and Bruce and I seized the opportunity. *We were there because of Jack Mitchell's gift to the Club, because of his love and knowledge of the river.* We were there because of our wives' support of our spiritual journeys into the peace and solitude of nature.

Bruce and I set out from Seattle mid-morning on Thursday March 31, and with Bruce's steady driving arrived in Northport, WA. About 5:30 p.m., less than a mile from the Canadian border. I felt lucky to have a partner like Bruce who laughs easily, seems always to be happy, whose happiness is contagious. We both felt lucky to be fishing with a guide like Jack Mitchell, a man of conspicuous competence and enthusiasm, who gave us the gift of confidence, and enhanced our appreciation of the river and its rainbow trout. He was more than a guide, also a teacher and friend. (cont. page 3)



Upper Columbia River Redband Trout: Yes we treasure them, but we know less of their life history than any other fish in the River - Reason enough to activate OFF Education and help make the 2011 OFF Conservation Auction the best in Club history.

TIGHTLINES Editorial

A note from Jack Mitchell: "Guiding anglers and facilitating fly fishing adventure on different watersheds has been my job for over 22 years. It is an absolute pleasure to spend time with fellow anglers waterside. *Keith and Bruce are awesome guys and it most definitely was my treat to spend time with them on the Upper Columbia this spring.* Washington is experiencing a HUGE winter. Due to this, our summer and fall seasons should be a major thumbs up on all our watersheds - Ample cold water, what more could you ask for? Nature is an incredibly large office. Have a seat and enjoy!

Best, Jack Mitchell, Owner of The Evening Hatch

TIGHTLINES Interview:

Bill Baker, Biologist WDFW

Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds March speakers included the WDFW trio of biologists Chris Donley, Chad Jackson, and Bill P. Baker. Bill expressed his keen interest in the Upper Columbia River sport fishery and encouraged members to experience its magnificent fly fishery for rainbow trout, including wild redband trout. Because Bill spoke last and the trip home would be long, his time with OFF was short and it was clear he would have enjoyed more conversation on the topic.

So, I contacted Bill by phone to give him the opportunity to comment further and share his knowledge.

OFF: We asked Bill, to what extent are the rainbow trout in the upper Columbia River wild redband trout, and summarize his remarks here:

Of all the salmonid populations in the River there is perhaps more to learn about the redband trout than any other species. Nonetheless, from the collective data and history, Bill feels that the data indicate there has been "very little" introgression of coastal rainbow trout with redband trout, making the sport fishery in the upper Columbia River a "high percentage" catch of redband trout. Bill was kind to provide an excellent summary of redband trout and cutthroat trout in the upper Columbia River, as well as some guiding principals for future field and genetic lab studies for fisheries, life history and native population recruitment surveys.

Photo Credit: www.theeveninghatch.com

The upper Columbia River redband trout are a subspecies of rainbow trout native to the Columbia River Drainage east of the Cascade Mountains as far as barrier falls on the Snake, Spokane, Pend Oreille, and Kootenai rivers. There is considerable variability in the life history of Columbia River redband trout including both anadromous (steelhead) and potamodromous forms. The anadromous life history form of redband trout was eliminated from the upper Columbia River with the construction of Grand Coulee Dam in 1939. Non-native hatchery rainbow trout were subsequently stocked in the upper Columbia River and its tributaries to provide angling opportunities. Natural reproducing rainbow trout still occur in the upper Columbia River drainage.. and until recently there was speculation that these populations were hybridized with hatchery plants. However, recent microsatellite DNA analysis conducted on wild rainbow trout in the upper Columbia River drainage indicated that some stocks are pure redband trout, presumed to be native.

Little is known about seasonal habitat use and migration patterns of redband trout in Lake Roosevelt and the upper Columbia River. Seasonally, the redband population in the Lake Roosevelt may consist of individuals from different genetically unique stocks that migrate to spatially isolated spawning areas. Identification of the stock structure and life history strategies have not been completed. The most comprehensive data exists only for the Sanpoil River. Bill provided the following list of objectives that will guide future work in Lake Roosevelt and on the upper Columbia River:

Biological Objective 1: Manage subsistence and recreational harvest of stocks of wild redband trout in Lake Roosevelt and the upper Columbia River to allow for conservation, enhancement, and restoration.

Biological Objective 2: Minimize impacts of the Lake Roosevelt hatchery rainbow trout program on wild redband trout.

Biological Objective 3: Assess entrainment of hatchery triploid rainbow trout from lake Roosevelt.

A TIGHTLINES Education Moment:

The life cycle of redband trout in Lake Roosevelt and the upper Columbia River are of three types:

Fluvial, fluvial-adfluvial, and lacustrine-adfluvial.

Definitions:

Fluvial: The entire life cycle of the fish is confined within their stream or river home range.

Fluvial-adfluvial: Fish leave main stream rivers to enter tributary streams for some aspect of their life history.

Lacustrine-adfluvial: Fish spend much of their life history in lakes but ascend inlet tributaries for some aspect of their life history.

Allacustrine: Fish have the same behavior as lacustrine, except that they migrate to the lake outlet to spawn.

OFF: What about Cutthroat Trout in the upper Columbia River?

Bill explained that it is rare in nature to have native cutthroat and native rainbow trout prevalent in one watershed. He believes that the resident cutthroat trout in the upper Columbia are from historical WDFW plants of Kings Lake cutthroat which were planted in Deep Lake and were washed out via Deep Creek into the upper Columbia River. With historical acuity, Bill pointed out that in the 1940's Kings Lake was one of the first lakes treated with rotenone to establish an all cutthroat trout population, which was then lake trap managed for broodstock purposes. In this case, the fish used to stock Kings Lake were from Granite Creek (Priest Lake) cutthroat stock. Thanks to Bill Baker, WDFW.

Education Notice: OFF members have the opportunity to take up this discussion via the OFF Group Book Read of Pat Trotter's

Cutthroat: Native Trout of the West. Contact the Editor, Thomas Sawtell.

Our Fly Fishing President

The President fished Lenice Lake on the third Saturday in March. He told the story to reporters this way: I arrived late Friday night. I did not have time to fish, but I got my boat hauled down to the lake. I saw Captain Larry on what looked like a very large razor scooter pulled by two of his dogs. I talked to him later. It's a new event, cross country on a scooter pulled by dogs. I stayed at the motel in Vantage to be close to the lake.

I got up early Saturday and made it to the lake by 8:00 am. The day was beautiful, slightly overcast with no wind. I can count on one hand the day's I have seen over there with no wind. There was not much activity, so I headed down to the west end of the lake. I put on a size 20 chironomid and waited for the hatch. **The hatch started about 10:00 am. The fish were everywhere. The small grey bead head fly was the ticket. The fish never touched my dropper. The hatch lasted until about 2:00.** After that it was very slow. I fished till about 4:00 then headed back to shore. I landed seven fish, and lost a few more.

Since it was third Saturday Captain Larry did his famous fish chowder. As always, it was terrific. Larry is a wonderful cook. Several members of the Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds were there, including Mike Truax and others. We all talked to Larry about the club, and told him we were disappointed he had dropped out. He admitted he missed us too. Captain Larry decided to re-up and paid his dues that night. I gave the money to Bill at the officers meeting the next Wednesday. After much good food, spirits, and camaraderie, I headed back to the barn.

Sunday was cold very cloudy. I fished from about 9:00 until 11:00 am. There was no hatch that morning. At 11:00 am the rain started. I decided to load up and head home. I loaded up the truck and headed home. It did not stop raining until I crossed the pass. Overall, a great weekend for President Rolf Mogster.

Lake Side Fly Tying Yields Lenice Lake Trout

Mike Bunney: Steve Murray, Don Summers, Dave Markle and I went to Lake Lenice on March 24 - 27 2011. We started fishing on the 25th and caught about six fish between 20 to 24 inches. The weather was threatening but did not open on us. We all stayed in Steve's 5th wheel. Bill Scott joined us on Saturday and spent the night. Steve's son Josh also meet up with us on Saturday and spent the night. The fishing on Saturday was good. **Don Summers caught nine nice fish on a fly that he tied up the night before.** We woke up on Sunday with the wind blowing hard. We spent Sunday morning relaxing and enjoying Josh and Bill's company. We left for home around 1:00 pm.

Mike Truax: I went to Lake Lenice and froze my feet in its icy water. Even if I had taken my camera out in the pontoon boat, I was shaking so hard the picture would have been only a blur.



Rainbow Wrangling on the Upper Columbia

by Keith Stamm continued

The Upper Columbia is one of the last free-flowing stretches of the river, lying between the Canadian border and the upper end of Lake Roosevelt. Most of the Columbia's moving water has been brought to a standstill behind a series of hydro-electric dams. **To be on this one free-flowing stretch is to experience the river in its former wild glory;** it is to feel the unseen power behind all that is. It is spiritual power, quite unlike the electric power down river.

It is a river that hides its trout well. It takes a Jack Mitchell to find them because they are not found just anywhere in this vast stream of water. They are tucked away in nooks and crannies that only a practiced eye can perceive. This is complicated by the fact that the river level rises and falls daily. It is a different river every day. The fish move in response to these changes. Without Jack's experienced eye we would have been blind squirrels searching for acorns. Jack taught us to "swing" our flies with the current along the edges of current seams, ridges, and drop-offs. The river's currents, if you know how to read them, give you a map of the bottom of the river, essential to finding fish. We constantly changed fly rods and lines, depending on the water depth. It was important to get the fly close to the bottom of the river. Even when you're doing things right this



fishing is not a numbers game. Sometimes it takes a while to locate the fish. After a slow morning on Saturday we finally said, "It's time to stop fishing and start catching," and with that we did. The fish were worth waiting for.

Most of the time Keith used the 10-foot, 6-weight fly rod purchased from OFF member, Norm Primc. Lucky me! He should have never sold it. That rod was a fish magnet, especially when armed with the "nasty little sculpin," a fly Keith tied, a woolly bugger with a deer hair, muddler style head. Jack dubbed it the "Stamm Special" and asked Keith to leave a few behind for him to use.

I hope I have conveyed how it feels to "wrangle rainbows" on the Columbia. Yes, we caught a few, in fact several 20 inches or better. They all fought hard with attitude. Thank you Jack. Thank you Columbia River.

OLYMPIC FLY FISHERS OF EDMONDS

Spring 2011 Outings Schedule

Bill Scott, Outing Chairman

Lone Lake

Lone Lake will be on the 16th of April and Steve Murray has agreed to roll in the 5th wheeler and host the lunch. For those who missed it - Steve's dish last year was Filet Mignon wrapped in bacon with shrimp sauce. I don't know if he can top that but I'm sure he will do something very nice.

We will take a poll at the meeting to get an idea of the number planning to come to the Lone Lake outing. Also, we need to donate some bucks at the outing to help cover the cost of the meal. This is a fun outing and only takes a day. It is usually a good mix of different people from OFF. Below is a report regarding Lone Lake fishing in February. The water should be a little warmer in April. It's not a remote type lake but it's fun.

Chopaka and Blue Lake

The Chopaka trip is currently planned for May 19 until the end of the month but there are others discussing an early May trip, stay tuned. You can fish Chopaka, both Blue Lakes, and there are some smaller lakes just north of the Sinlehekin Blue lake. This is a beautiful area in Washington State, one of my favorites. The Sinlehekin Blue Lake is located at the bottom of a canyon, with towering ridge tops on two opposite sides of the lake. If you've never been in the area, you are missing something. This is where I first ran into Captain Larry and was exposed to fly fishing. I have since had a lot of fun with many OFF members there. One of the OFF customs is to meet for dinner one night while we are all in the Okanagan area, sometimes fishing different lakes. It's fun to hear about everyone's adventures, even the ones that go bad. Conconully and Tonasket can both be dinner locations.

Welcome New Member

Wade Nash, Edmonds WA

Over the years Wade has enjoyed motorcycling to favorite western fly fishing locations. He had considered joining the Club in the past, and decided that Spring 2011 was the right time to join up and increase his time on the water.



Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds

Education, Conservation, Camaraderie and the Pursuit of Happiness with Dry Flies, Wet Flies, Nymphs and Streamers...



Jack Mitchell, Guide and Owner of the Evening Hatch with OFF member Keith Stamm and Bruce Johnson, Upper Columbia River, April 1, 2011 12:26pm



The General meeting is held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the South County Senior Center, 220 Railroad Ave., Edmonds, WA. Social hour: 6:00 p.m. The Business meeting is held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Alf's, 4820 196th SW, Lynnwood, WA. at 6:00 p.m.

Officers:

Rolf Mogster, President, 206-546-2677
Bruce Johnson, V.P., 425-742-2252
Bill MacDonald, Treasurer, 425-774-4769
Thomas Sawtell, Communications. & TIGHTLINES, 425-744-0401
Keith Stamm, Secretary, 206-368-5596
Phil Sacks, Gillie, 425-741-7311
Mike Bunney, Trustee, 425-672-3345

Chairs:

Mike Truax, Conservation, 425-672-6963
William Scott, Outings
Terry Zeitner, Membership
Open seat, Education
Beverage Meister, Jeff Bandy

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