



# The Lower Columbia Flyfisher

June 2020

Issue 263

**Meeting: Not quite yet**  
**Time: At your Leisure**  
**Place: Your house and mine**

**Next board meeting** - TBD at a location maybe not near you

## **PROGRAM: Recommend anything other than watching the news**

Certainly is a good time for fishing to be opened up to distract one from the discouraging news cycle. I know several folks are taking advantage and hear the bluegill have been cooperative at Swofford. Munn Lake has had an LCFF presence or two. Have heard rumors there are steelhead and salmon to be had but limited open water.....anyone care to report?

Speaking of which, now would be the best time for everyone to share their fishing reports via writing an email of your experience to the LCFF group. You don't have to wait for the meeting date, just throw it out whenever it suits you. If you don't know how give me a call and I can talk you through it.

The annual pilgrimage to Chopaka seems to be on hold as the campgrounds have not yet opened. I suspect pent-up demand might result on the campgrounds getting swamped once it does open so anyone going should have a plan B and C if heading that way.

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If you are looking for a different outlet, Here's a note from Buchman on an option near home:

"I've been to Snag Lake in Pacific county three times this month... caught LOTS of rainbow and brown trout... all about 8-10 inches. On a three wgt Rod and four lb. test tippet. Also caught a 5 lb. steelhead Game Dept. planted about two weeks ago I'm told. I must have seen about 6 steelhead in the clear water. This could be a good trip for the guys during warm weather.... Its about 1 hr. 15 min. from Longview. What else is there to do ? Bob "

## **Congratulations to 2020/2021 LCFF officers and Board!**

Nominations and appointments were accepted as presented last month and will assume office beginning October 1. Doug Stafford will assume the presidency as Terry retires to the board position as past President. Dave Houten assumes the Treasurer's spot. Jerry Schroeder, Lyle Barker, Hal Mahnke, Bob Buchman, Jim Williams, Dave Johnson, and John Kenagy return to the board.

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If you've submitted a story, fish report, or any article not yet published please contact me. Either I did not receive it, it got somehow blocked by a filter, wasn't obvious you intended it to be in the newsletter, or got lost in the myriad of daily emails. We'll find it and get you in print.

Obviously this COVID affliction makes everything unpredictable. As we head into the summer not only our meetings but our outings remain subject to cancellation. Keep outing dates on your calendar and watch for news in your email, information on outings may be short-term and not meet newsletter publishing schedule.

**Given these restrictive times it seemed worthy to reprint an article of some years ago.**

**Yearning for Montana's Blue Ribbon Streams but only have a weekend?.. try the Yakima**

So you missed out on the Montana excursions, not enough time or \$\$ in the budget, but can't shake the chubby just thinking about it spawns. Well there is a option for sweet release and its only a few hours away. Every bit the same kind of water and fishing as all the best of Rocky Mountain Blue Ribbon trout streams and so often overlooked is the Yakima.

Often called Washington's "blue ribbon" trout stream it has healthy enough regional following to support a number of professional guide services and we drive right past it on our way to Montana's "hallowed ground". Yet, as I reflect on memories I recall a career day long past, an LCFF outing there. Another weekend bachelor trip that brought a 4 pounder to hand just along the highway, enough spectacle to be performance for an audience pulling off the road, hanging U-turns to the shoulder and cheering heartily as for a Broadway encore while I landed, then released that beauty. In truth I was a bachelor at the time, and fishing Barbless.

Then there were the weekend trips as a single Dad, my sons and I booked in flea-bag Ellensburg hotels. Close enough to the Canyon stretch to be on water in 20 minutes but having convenience of restaurant food after dark, for we always were. After all, a single Dad I was and still a bachelor. Yes, we usually took the annual vacation to Aunt Deanna's in Missoula, but fishing time had to be budgeted with camping, hiking, and rock hounding pursuits. It was on the Yakima I got to see my sons fly casting and fish handling skills sharpened, we had no distractions there.

Draining Keechelus Lake along I-90, the Yakima combines the best of tailwater fishery's controlled flow and temperature becoming typical freestone mountain stream topography as it winds it's way past Cle-Elum and Ellensburg, through the canyon and past Rosa Dam's irrigation detour, eventually slowing and warming as it seeks the Snake. The prime recognized fly water is Rosa dam upstream, with easy public access having a highway of one sort or another through much of its travel. Along the way many tributaries join in such as the Naches, Cle-Elum and Teanaway Rivers, each with their own opportunities to be discovered.

If considering exploring here be sure to decontaminate your waders as the primary species is rainbow and I have not heard whirling disease has discovered the Yakima any more than we have. Rare is a cutthroat even rarer still a bull or small brookie in upper reaches and tributaries, though all exist.

Yakima, being born of a mountain reservoir, is managed for flows supporting irrigation as well as trout so at times early spring and summer wading can limited to riffles near the bank. This should not be a deterrent as in these higher flows fish crowd the edges, often holding in water only a few inches deep just along shoreline structure. Very effective technique at these times is working upstream near shore pitching a terrestrial or your favorite dry along the edges. Advantage to this irrigation influenced flow is Yakima never rages outside its banks as an untamed snowmelt fed river will do spring through early summer.

Where the Yakima shines is in floating and but for a stretch for several miles below the dam it's gentle riffle-run-pool character invite pontoons as well as rafts and drift boats. Plenty of put-in and take-outs exist along it's length, though above Ellensburg a quick stop or call to a local shop will assist finding the correct road for those new to the river. The Yakima fishes well with typical low-water flow during fall through winter into early spring when irrigation begins or there is need to control reservoir level.

Yakima is generally a dry fly river with your typical caddis, BWO, and PMD patterns effective as well as terrestrials such as ants, beetles, always with late summer grasshoppers. Late spring even brings another of Rocky Mountain character with an actual Salmon Fly hatch. If you find a slow day my experience is the Hare's Ear out fishes the PT , but don't overlook a decent sized golden stonefly nymph as the Yakima is loaded with them. With lots of riffle water swinging a wet fly is productive, though the larger fish will hang near some kind of structure.

So save yourself 1000 miles and discover the Yakima, even beauty of the surrounding landscape would put you smack in the heart of the Rockies. Come to think of it, I wonder what the boys are doing next weekend...

Ron Pihl

OK, here's another story worthy to reprint and of a water not so far away. This submitted to our 2012 writing contest. Enjoy;

Last fall my friend Terry and I joined Fossil, Oregon guide Steve Fleming of Mah-Hah Outfitters for a three day, two night float of the John Day River in eastern Oregon. The river is named after John Day, a Virginia backwoodsman and member of the Astor-Hunt overland party of 1811-1812. The John Day is the longest undammed river within the state and is the third longest free flowing river in the contiguous United States. In 1971 75 smallmouth bass were introduced into the river and today that would be an average day's catch for an angler. Its summer steelhead run is one of the last all wild anadromous runs east of the Cascades. Although it may seem incongruous in an article about fishing, the following account is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth

"All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown;  
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown."

All's well that ends well. Act 4, Scene 4

In early November of 2011 my friend Terry and I crawled from our tents into the shattering brightness of an eastern Oregon sunrise. It was our second day of a three day guided trip on the John Day River in pursuit of summer steelhead, a fish with a reputation for being wild, intelligent, and stubborn. Since Terry and I have the same reputation, it promised to be an epic struggle, mano a aleta. The first day we had each caught fish using a center pin reel, strike indicators, and SHRIMP. But now camped for two nights on prime fly water we were ready to string up the rods and enter the fray.

The frozen water in my Nalgene water bottle that morning forecast the weather-bitterly cold, temperature of 28 degrees. My wading boots were frozen in the shape of two dead cats and my neoprene waders were stiff as plywood. Not to worry, a bit of judicious immersion in the 39 degree waters of the John Day and we were good to go, just a wee bit cold, but fired up for a day of flyfishing.

Of course 39 degrees is not prime fly fishing temperatures, but we were serious about swinging flies to catch a fish, even if it took all day. But a full day of casting and 10,000 perfect presentations of a fly proved inadequate, and in the teeth of a menacing storm we retired to our campsite, as fine a place you could wish for with camp tables, chairs, a short burn barrel for our fire pit, and Dutch oven lasagna and peach cobbler for dinner.

Steve had driven in two days earlier and supplied the firewood and fire ring so we were pretty well set. During dinner the wind built up tremendously and one tent collapsed completely after two of its poles split. I then realized how serious things were becoming, it was as if this storm were chasing the hounds of hell right through our camp.

We were hunkered down, backs to the wind, watching the blast furnace that was our campfire and enjoying an aperitif when Terry, glancing toward the black void of the river noticed something amiss and uttered the phrase that would change our night. . . "Where's our boat?" Our 18 foot Clackacraft drift boat, a looming white presence earlier where we had pulled it onto shore and ground anchored it with a 35 pound lead pyramid, was nowhere to be seen, the wind having freed it from its unnatural grounded state and it was now freely running the John Day River at night.

Armed with headlamps and a sense of panic, we quickly spotted the boat about 75 yards downstream and 50 feet offshore, meandering down a riffle like a hobbled horse. After a heroic game of tug of war we finally stalled that runaway back at camp, and retired for a windy, rainy, and sleepless night.

The following morning arrived with a slight breeze, warmer weather, and the good luck of finding all of our scattered gear safely imbedded in sagebrush downwind from our camp. Our portable camp table which had gone sailing over two of our three heads (the third head, mine, was the unlucky recipient of a mild concussion) just prior to our boat mishap was found perched on a sandy bank about 50 yards downriver.

And that day's fishing was ample reward for our troubles, Terry doubling his lifetime catch of steelhead and I landing a fifteen pound fish, my largest steelhead ever. Okay, we had given up on the fly fishing idea and were back to the center pins, but when in Rome, or on the John Day, follow the advice of the locals, especially if you have already paid for it. (No fish were harmed in the writing of this account.)

Mike Greenstreet

## Greased lines

.....Thanks to all of you that have submitted articles.....I really appreciate them and...If you have not seen your submitted article .....I will be using them in future issues.....Thanks again and keep them coming.

.....If any of the rest of you have an article, editorial or fishing story for the newsletter, submit it to the Editor at least 10 days before the first of each month:

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