

# Flyline

A Publication of the Flyfisher's Club of Oregon

F O U N D E D 1 9 6 1

**Join Flyfishers Club of Oregon on October 11th for a presentation by Christina Murphy, recipient of the FCO 2016 scholarship award.**

## Bio:

Christina Murphy is an Oregon native. She received three honors Bachelor's degrees, in Biology, Fisheries & Wildlife, and International Studies, before pursuing a Fulbright research project in Chile and completing her Master's degree at the Universitat de Girona in Spain. After years abroad, she returned to Oregon State University to start a PhD. She works regularly as part of a large team and is proud to participate in several scientific societies, including serving at the Vice President of the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society last year. Her research aims to understand ecological interactions within reservoirs located in headwaters of the Willamette River. The goal of her dissertation work is to inform dam and reservoir management decisions, especially regarding wild reservoir rearing juvenile Chinook Salmon.

## Description of presentation:

To improve passage of wild juvenile spring Chinook Salmon downstream through dams, in 2011 the US Army Corps of Engineers began to draw down Fall Creek Reservoir to streambed levels for short periods during late fall/ early winter. In this and other upper Willamette Reservoirs, a cohort of wild juvenile Chinook Salmon enters the reservoir during early spring. We have been studying three reservoirs in the upper Willamette Basin to examine reservoir conditions experienced by these juveniles. This presentation will cover this reservoir rearing life history in wild juvenile Chinook Salmon and the interesting shifts observed in Fall Creek Reservoir following the new water management; including the diets of top predators, the unusual patterns of zooplankton prey distributions, and the changing Fall Creek Reservoir fish community. It will cover how we expect these changes to influence wild juvenile Chinook Salmon in Fall Creek Reservoir and current efforts to model their growth and behavior in these systems.



## *President's Message*

Fall is in the air, the rustle of leaves and crisp mornings. I'm hopeful that some steelhead fishing is right around the corner. I spent a day on the Clackamas River two weekends past with a Spey Casting instructor named Simon Gawesworth. I have struggled with my Spey casting for 2 years trying to understand the mechanics of this cast. In one day it all came together for me, what an amazing instructor he was! His explanations followed by instruction painted a picture in my head that I just couldn't see before. If Royal Treatment offers this class again I would encourage you to take it. It was well worth it and Simon was delightful.



Last weekend I had the privilege of acting as a river helper for the Casting for Recovery event at the Big K Ranch on the Umpqua River. Fourteen breast cancer survivors gathered together for a weekend of healing, friendship and learning the art of Fly Fishing. On the last day the ladies are each joined by a river helper to take them out on the river and practice what they had learned. I was fortunate to spend my day with Kim. She shared her story with me and it was hard to imagine all that she had gone through - 10 surgeries in 8 years! As we stepped into the river and I helped her cast, I watched her smile and laugh, a really great laugh. I knew the river was going to be her peaceful place. I hope someday I see her on the river and maybe get a chance to fish with her again. As I left the Big K Ranch and drove back to Portland, I felt thankful for the friends that I had made, my health, and the opportunity to be part of something so special.

On a sad note, I would like to give my heartfelt condolences to Roger Bachman and his family. Roger shared with us at the last club meeting that he had lost his lovely wife Eve. I know I am safe to say that all of our prayers and thoughts are with their family.

My best to you,  
Teri

## *Member Matters*

### **Welcome to recent new members**

- Richard Harrington – Oregon City
- Brandon Schwindt – Portland

We have 188 members as of September 26th! Please remember to invite your fishing partners and encourage them to join!

Tight Lines,

Rick

### **Save the Date – and Please Note the Change!**

This year our Holiday Couples Night will be held on December 6th – the first Tuesday in December at the University Club. Please make a note of it and plan to bring a special person or three to join you!



## *Literary Angler*

*Editor's Note: I become more reflective in the fall. The wet days and pressing obligations force me to spend more time away from nature. In just a few days I find myself longing for the sound of water lapping rocks, the summer breeze rustling leaves, and the irritated call of a territorial jay. I love to read books and poems that bring glorious descriptions of nature indoors – like the cool sensation of the river pressing against my waders. Here are a few quotes from various authors that might bring those sensations to you. LKH*

### **Roderick Haig Brown**

I remember the good evenings I have fished, even the ones that realized material hopes not by the fish that came to the fly, but by the colour and movement of the water and sky by the sounds and scents and gentle stirrings that were all about me.

A river is water in its loveliest form; rivers have life and sound and movement and infinity of variation; rivers are veins of the earth through which the lifeblood returns to the heart.

### **Howard T. Walden II**

The existence of such omniscient giants as he, sentient in the deeps of a great pool, gives glamour to a stream and to all the fishing upon it.

### **Neil Patterson**

Tail fins, snouts poking out of weedbeds, silver patches where scales are missing against gravels, pinky warts. The more exacting flyfisher looks into the river and asks himself, "When is a trout not a trout." He looks for imaginary trout and takes away the tail, the fins, the gills, the body, the head- hoping something in the tight area he scans holds one or more elements of a trout – when it was never there in the first place.

### **Theodore Gordon**

It is the constant- or inconstant- change, the infinite variety in fly-fishing that binds us fast. It is impossible to grow weary of a sport that is never the same on any two days of the year.

### **Izaak Walton**

. . . when the lawyer is swallowed up with business and the statesman is preventing or contriving plots, then we sit on cowslip-banks, hear the birds sing, and possess ourselves in as much quietness as these silent silver streams . . .

### **Leonardo DaVinci**

The water you touch in a river is the last of that which has passed, and the first of that which is coming; thus it is with time.

## *Conservation Corner*

### **Columbia and Snake River Wild Steelhead at Dangerously Low Levels: Cause for Alarm**

State fishery managers predicted in mid-spring 2016 that there would be a low return of summer steelhead into the Columbia and Snake Rivers this year. Their pre-season forecasts were well below the average return from the previous ten years. Their initial fears came true and they have spent the last few months downgrading their already-low pre-season forecast. To their credit, Oregon and Washington agreed to reduce the harvest limit of two hatchery steelhead per angler per day to just one hatchery fish per day per angler in late July. Initially they applied the rule only to the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam which is not where most angling for steelhead takes place. Due to further run-reductions, as well as pressure to apply the harvest reduction throughout the Columbia River, the rule was applied throughout the main Columbia and Snake beginning in late August.

As mentioned, the 2016 forecast of wild steelhead returning to the Columbia and Snake Rivers started out low compared to the returns of the last ten years. Here is a breakdown of the run so far.

Original Pre-Season Forecast announced on July 12:

- 265,400 total adult summer steelhead predicted to cross Bonneville Dam
- 99,900 total wild adult summer steelhead predicted to pass Bonneville (37% of the total run)
- 9,200 Skamania-stock adult summer steelhead (these fish return to the Wind, White Salmon, Hood and Klickitat Rivers, including 3,400 wild adult summer steelhead (37% of total run of early summer fish))

The fishery agencies further delineate the Columbia and Snake River summer steelhead into two components based primarily on size and somewhat on run-timing. They classify smaller summer steelhead that are up to 30 inches (<78 cm) as the A-run steelhead, and summer steelhead that are over 30 inches (>78 cm) as B-run steelhead. Both the A-run and the B-run fish are part of the single population of mid-Columbia and Snake River Summer steelhead that are listed as threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The US v. Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC for the US v. Oregon harvest management process) downgraded their initial forecast on July 25, 2016.

Based on the new TAC report, state fishery managers revised their predicted return, announcing there would be 230,400 A-run summer steelhead and (89,100 wild A-run steelhead - 37% of the total run) and 25,800 B-run summer steelhead (and only 7,400 wild B-run steelhead - 29% of the total B-run return).

Here is the revised forecast:

- 256,200 total steelhead
- 96,500 total wild
- 230,400 A- run (89,100 wild)
- 25,800 B-run (7,400 wild)

Alarmingly, just two weeks later, the TAC further revised its forecast for steelhead on August 15, dropping the total overall run adult summer steelhead from 256,200 to 149,200 total steelhead.

Here is their revised forecast issued in mid-August:

- 149,200 total steelhead, with only 21% (31,000) predicted to be wild summer steelhead.
- The estimated the A-run was predicted to be 123,400 adults.
- There was no change to the B-run forecast because only a small portion of that run

component had passed over Bonneville, and often, the B-run does not correspond to the trends of the A-run return.

While the B-run forecast remained unchanged, the agencies authorized multiple commercial and recreational fisheries that impact the B-run return - with critical uncertainties unresolved.

The risk and the burden on conservation should fall on the fisheries, not the fish.

Wild Steelhead in the Columbia and Snake River (both juvenile and adults) already face a myriad of known and cumulative limiting factors:

1. Predation by seals and sea lions up to Bonneville Dam
2. Hooking mortality in the Buoy 10 salmon fishery
3. Hooking mortality in the recreational fishery at every thermal refugia along the Columbia up to Bonneville Dam
4. Net-caught release mortality in lower Columbia River commercial fisheries (gill net and seine nets)
5. Mortality from fish passage delays at fish passage facilities at mainstem dams
6. Mortality due to water quality and quantity degradation (temps, discharges, diversions)
7. Illegal harvest in the recreational fishery
8. Illegal harvest in the commercial fishery below Bonneville
9. Hooking mortality in the Columbia and in river-mouth fisheries above Bonneville
10. Tribal Treaty harvest in ceremonial, subsistence and commercial fisheries in Zone 6
11. Illegal harvest in the Tribal Treaty commercial harvest
12. Illegal harvest in the recreational fishery above Bonneville and in tributaries
13. Ongoing mortality and other productivity diminishment from fish passage facilities
14. Mortality from warm water (68f and higher) in the Columbia and Snake Rivers

Clearly, based on the management decisions made this summer, harvest allocation and management of salmon (sockeye, chinook and coho) is also a major impediment for wild steelhead.

The B-run forecast was not reduced as only a very small number of those fish had yet passed Bonneville Dam so there was no ability to predict if the B-runs would also be coming back in low numbers as the A-run had.

The fisheries managed and authorized by the Columbia River Compact begin in the ocean in the spring and early summer. The fisheries progress upstream as the fish runs progress into the estuary and lower river tributaries. Most are authorized before there are many fish passing Bonneville Dam which is the first place accurate counts can be made and applied to true the preliminary forecasts based on a host of predictive measures.

The risks of extinction due to low escapement or returning adult success is basically placed on the wild fish. The harvest regime machine in place on the Columbia River begins during meetings that are part of something called the North of Falcon Agreement - a series of meetings that begin in the winter. The co-managers (tribes, states, feds) meet along with stakeholders from every interest group (commercial and recreational fishery representatives) for a series of meetings in which harvest is allocated according to specific IFQs (individual fishery quotas). The allocation is largely set by court-mandated procedures arising from an on-going legal proceeding known as US v. Oregon - essentially it is a federal court case in which the federal government sued Oregon on behalf of the treaty tribes to force Oregon to honor the treaties signed between the tribes and the federal and state authorities. This court proceeding is closed to everyone and the special technical advisors who advise the court as to the status of the salmon and steelhead runs also may withhold their findings and analysis from the public.

While the 2016 steelhead runs have increased slightly in the past few weeks, they are still well below the current ten-year average (2015-2006). As of September 30, the total combined

return of hatchery and wild summer steelhead to the Columbia River basin was merely 51% of the current ten-year average and only 43.3% of the best ten-year average (2010-2001). When you exclude hatchery steelhead, the wild adult return of steelhead in 2016 is 42.9% of the current ten-year average and 41.2% of the best ten-year average.

When you consider that the past harvest of Snake River wild steelhead exceeded 40,000 fish, a combined return of 40,000 hatchery and wild adult steelhead to the Snake River is a tragic and unacceptable circumstance.

David Moskowitz

