



Be a Conservation Angler

Wild Steelhead from the Columbia River are facing their third consecutive poor return. In 2019, fewer than 950 wild B-run Steelhead returned to Idaho. Consider that the B-run population was over 30,000 fish when Snake River summer Steelhead were ESA listed in 1997. Fewer than 50,000 wild Steelhead migrating up the Columbia and Snake Rivers in 2019 will face angling effort measured in thousands of angler days. To preserve these iconic and threatened wild fish, all anglers must be incredibly careful and conservative, even considering not fishing for Steelhead at all.

Twelve Ways to be a Conservation Angler

1. Make a conscious choice to not fish in areas where you know wild fish will congregate in order to survive warm water or heavy fishing pressure.
2. Fishery research activities are required to stop work when water temperatures exceed 68f, so voluntarily stop your angling when water temperatures reach 68f.
3. Use an appropriately-sized rod, reel and line combination that allows you to land your fish without undue time and stress.
4. Don't use barbed hooks or treble hooks. Use small gap hooks and pinch the barbs when you change flies or lures.
5. Keep fish in the water. Don't take a picture of your catch if you cannot keep the fish in the water, or cannot keep the fish from hurting itself while it is struggling and thrashing about.
6. Don't drag a wild fish into shallow or silty water or onto rocky or sandy banks while landing it. The silt and sand can hurt the gills, and the fish can mortally wound itself on the cobbles.

7. Carefully handle a landed fish in a safe place with clean flowing water. Wet your net, hand or any glove or rag you may use before handling your fish. Handle your fish lightly without squeezing or lifting them. Use a rubberized mesh net rather than a knotted nylon or cotton, and try to photograph and measure your fish while it remains in the water.
8. Be patient and take the time to allow your fish to recover its strength and balance and can stay upright before you release it into the current.
9. Avoid using bait. You know it works, so try something less effective. Certainly don't use harmful chemicals to make bait nor treat bait to make it "tastier."
10. Know or learn what a salmon, steelhead or trout spawning nest (or redd) looks like so when you encounter them, you can avoid wading through spawning beds. Never fish over spawning fish.
11. Take a novice fishing (during prime time) and teach them how to fish, and to respect the river, fellow anglers, and most of all, the fish themselves.
12. Know the number for the fishery enforcement agency in your area and report illegal or suspicious behavior by others who are harming or harassing wild fish. Here are Pacific Northwest TIP numbers:

OR: 800-452-7888

WA: 877-933-9847

ID: 800-632-5999

A Conservation Angler goes fishing not only to catch or encounter a fish but also to enjoy nature's gift of clear sweet waters, lush forests, inspiring desert canyon, lonely and serene tundra and all of the creatures that live in them.

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The Conservation Angler is a nonprofit organization that advocates for the protection, scientific study, and conservation of iconic wild anadromous fish populations and the rivers that support them.



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