



Somewhere on the Skagit/Sauk System – Dave Campbell

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## President's Message Wayne Balsiger

**Changing the Order of Activities at the April Meeting:** we are switching things around starting in April. After introductions, new members initiation, and fishing reports, we will go straight to the main presentation. Then break, the RAFFLE this month and the business portion of the meeting. So, for April we will start around 7:20 PM as we have the last several meetings. In May we plan to start closer to 7:00 PM.

**The presentation this month** should be good as we learn from our own member Josh Rubenstein about The Nature Conservancy and all that they do. One aspect is protecting Land, Fresh Water, and the Ocean. Read the article on it in the newsletter.

**RAFFLE THIS MEETING:** Peter Maunsell has volunteered to run a raffle at the April meeting. I think there are some nice items coming up for you to win. \$5 gets you 6 chances to win.

**2024 NFA Budget:** The Steering Committee has submitted the budget for your approval at the May meeting.

**Invite your friends to a meeting.** Invite them to join the club.

**The 2024 Outings** are posted now on the website. We have several of our favorite Outings on the calendar. **We Need you to Step up.** But we are going to cancel some unless we get some co-hosts and hosts. We do still need your help as a co-host or host. We are open to options on the food side of it as well. Many of us enjoy the outings and yes you get to help on everyone with food. Please consider stepping up. So let Russ and/or me know. It's a good time to volunteer!

**Assistant Webmaster, Flypaper layout.** Brett is not leaving but we were talking about succession planning and Brett said, I need an assistant to learn about our website, hosted by Wild Apricot. One aspect is laying out the Flypaper each

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month on the website. Let us know if you are interested in learning more about websites.

**Put together an article for the Flypaper.** You have knowledge about many topics. Write up a quick article for the Flypaper and send it to Nick Sherman. It is easy to become a published author at NFA.

**Monthly Raffle:** We are looking for a volunteer to host the meeting Raffles at the meeting. We have items to raffle so this is not chasing goods. Let me know if you are interested in helping with this activity.

**The club** was founded in 1972 as a family friendly club and it still is. This is our 52<sup>nd</sup> year. We are looking for new members. You enjoy the club and the camaraderie, outings, meetings, and fishing. Invite your friends to a meeting. Invite them to join the club. Our activities and dues are a bargain. You can spend more on a dinner out than one year of dues.

Tight Lines,

Wayne

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## Membership Susanne Staats



I want to welcome Paul Van Every as a new member of NFA. Paul is friends with NFA member Joe Coakley, who urged Paul to join our club. Paul and Joe went fishing together on Christmas Island in February this year.

Paul started fly fishing in 1986. He built an 8.5' 6 weight rod using a Sage blank. He taught himself how to tie flies and started fishing on the Big Wood River in Idaho. From where Paul grew up, the nearest fly shop was fifty miles away, so Paul learned to do everything himself. Paul also tried steelhead fishing many years ago. After being told he would fish for many years without catching a steelhead on a fly rod, he gave it a go and successfully landed a steelhead within 45 minutes. Paul admitted the steelhead have been less frequent over the last few years.



Paul joined NFA because he wanted to try all kinds of fly fishing with other like-minded people. He loves river fishing but also enjoys getting out on lakes and fishing for sea-run cutthroat. Paul is looking forward to going on the Upper Yakima NFA outing in April.

Another new member is Bob Scoverski. Bob and his wife were fishing on the Yakima in the Cle Elum area earlier this year when he met NFA member Scott Keenholts. Scott told Bob about NFA and Bob decided to join the club to meet other people who fly fish. Bob has been fly fishing about twenty years. He has taken fly tying classes and ties his own flies. Bob especially likes fishing rivers and creeks. When he can combine fly fishing with hikes, that's even better. He

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frequently explores new creeks in the Mt. Rainier area and will be traveling in April to Melrose Montana to fish the Big Hole River.



In addition to fly fishing, Bob is a photographer, especially street photography. He also enjoys traveling, bicycling, and playing the guitar.

If you see Paul and Bob at future meetings and outings, please introduce yourself and welcome them into the club.

Susanne

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## April Speaker – Josh Rubenstein

As fly fishers we are keenly aware that our fish stocks are diminishing year after year from a variety of challenges. Many of us have heard of the Nature Conservancy but we might not know how their efforts benefit us.

We're facing two existential crises: climate change and rapid biodiversity loss. Reversing these crises requires protecting and sustainably managing our ocean, land, and fresh water. The Nature Conservancy joins others in pressing for urgent stewardship of our world's precious fresh water. The science is clear. We must radically scale up our protection efforts around the world. Our best hope for a healthy and resilient planet is to protect at least 30% of lands, fresh water and ocean by 2030.

By 2030, TNC aims to conserve: 650 million hectares (1.6 billion acres) of healthy land, 1 million kilometers (621,000 miles) of river, 30 million hectares (74 million acres) of lakes and wetlands, and 4 billion hectares (9.9 billion acres) of ocean. Our own Josh Rubenstein will provide insight into how The Nature Conservancy is working to attain these goals in Washington.



## Meet A Member by Susanne Staats

Starting with this month's newsletter, I'll be writing a monthly article on a member of NFA. I hope the article will help members get to know each other and I want to highlight the numerous ways members contribute to support our club. This month's featured member is Norm Hill. Norm joined NFA in January 2019. He quickly got involved in club outings and events. He participated in the club's 2019 fly tying classes and signed up for several outings including Western Montana



Streams, Camano Island and Munn Lake. In 2020, Norm agreed to take on the job of club librarian and has continued serving as librarian to the present day. Norm hauls up bins of books and DVDs from the meeting hall basement and displays them at the monthly club meetings for members to view and check out.

Scott Keenholts and Norm Hill fishing the Selway River

Norm has been fishing since childhood and first tried fly fishing while in high school. He has attended many club outings and enjoys going to new places with club members. Norm learned about

NFA through club member Scott Keenholts, who he has known since junior high school. In addition to fly fishing, Norm also enjoys hiking and climbing, mostly in the Cascades. He and Scott have hiked and fished many alpine lakes over the years. Norm has also made trips in Idaho and Montana and is looking forward to three weeks exploring California and Utah in mid-March. One area he'll be checking out is fishing the Green River below Flaming Gorge. When he comes back, Norm plans to join the club outing at Coffee Pot Lake.

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## Sauk River Outing by Nick Sherman



The dot under the bridge on the Sauk is Dave Campbell

I met Dave Campbell years ago playing tennis and he kept showing intriguing pictures of gorgeous fish and the fly that he used. But he was purposely vague as to where he encountered these beauties. Even after I joined NFA, Dave kept his cards close to the vest. On the Eglon Beach outing, I learned his tactics for salmon from shore and on the Skagit River, we had great success on pink salmon when Dave tutored us. So, when the Sauk River steelhead outing was announced, I punched my ticket early.

I had never attempted to catch a steelhead. In fact, I've never braved the wet and windy winter weather to try any river fishing. I broke down and bought an eight-

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weight sink tip fly line just for the Sauk. Alas, when the February 27th date approached, Dave announced,

*“Snow/rain coming to the Sauk River this weekend. 3” of snow predicted for Darrington Sunday, 4” Monday and 4” on Tuesday. By experience, I know conditions will be more extreme where the rivers flows between two mountains on its way to the Skagit. This situation creates unsafe driving and walking conditions.”*

Dave later explained to us that one time he hit water covered ice on Sauk River Road and rolled his pick-up five times. So, we postponed to March 5th. I went skiing instead and we had “hero” snow not far away at Stevens Pass, so it was a wise decision.

Before March 5th, Dave contracted Covid and the trip was deferred to March 19th. That presented me with a terrible dilemma. We had longtime friends landing at SeaTac before noon. I figured that since Henry hadn’t complained in 2003 when I hooked him in the back of his head with an elk hair caddis, he surely would understand the priority of a fly-fishing outing. My spouse chose to differ about my being absent. Strongly. Vehemently. **“What don’t you get about this!”** But I needed to learn how Dave and Jim Watson did the Sauk! I announced that I needed sleep because I had to get up early, but that I would depart the outing early enough to be home for our visitors. That went over like a lead balloon, thus my wife ingeniously set up a speaker in the bedroom and played Flaco Jimenez at 100 decibels. I can sleep through a lot, but Tejano accordion could be used in prisoner interrogations.



I arrived at the Blue Bird Cafe in Arlington at 8 am, where Dave, Jim, Carol Ferrara Johnson, Wytold Lebing, and Bill Denzel convened for a 4000-calorie breakfast. This breakfast was much more enjoyable than in the past when the Blue Bird is the midpoint of 40 grueling miles on the spectacularly unscenic Centennial Bike Trail. Over coffee, Jim and Dave reviewed the fishing access points that we would visit before fishing. Carol compared the three plus fly fishing clubs she belongs to.

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Clockwise, Carol, Wytold, Bill, Dave, and Jim

This was the prettiest day of 2024. The drive over to Darrington was spectacular with the sun shining on the incredibly jagged North Cascade Mountains with their deep snowpack. The first stop was the Sauk River Bridge, right by the sweeping expanse of the bustling Hampton Lumber Mill. The Sauk was running 4,000 cfs that day, high with snowmelt. Per Dave, the wade fishing is better here at 2,000.

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Looking south from Darrington.

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That's where the fish will be holding!

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Wytold and the mountain.

Next was the Bryson Road River access. After our leaders explained the wade fishing options, we walked back to our cars enjoying the spring-like bliss. Bearing down on us was a barking dog and an angry landowner with a camera to record our license plates to report speeders. We had not noticed the 20-mph speed sign on this tiny lane. When Wytold offered a sincere apology, the man said, “Apology not accepted!” He said his wife was angry about our caravan - I thought, “Not as angry as my wife”. Just as things were at their tensest, Carol came up and said, “Hi, Tom. Good to see you!” That totally defused the situation. What a small world that they had belonged to the same fly-fishing club in Everett! I was wondering how Tom’s wife would react to this de-escalation, but at least I didn’t hear any Flaco Jimenez playing as we went by their house.



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Trip Leaders Dave Campbell and Jim Watson on either side of Wytold as Dave explains flies to use in this situation.

At the Sauk River Boat launch, we met up with Ben Chickadel who had started fishing when the main group was running late. Dave explained the fishing techniques and flies and gave us each an orange tungsten-bead wooly bugger and a Thor to try out.



Orange tungsten bead wooly bugger and a Thor.

Jim took half of us down to check out the White Creek put-in and the bridge on the road to Concrete, which turned out to be closed for construction. At that point, I had only a half hour to fish without stirring up marital discord, so I left the group and walked down to the river.





The right spot, but how should the fly be presented?

What a gorgeous day! I had been troubled with a tailing loop when I practiced at home, but with Dave's woolly bugger, a thicker butt section of the leader, and an easy water haul, the line cast beautifully. I knew I needed to get the fly down deep into slower water where the steelhead coming upstream might be holding. But Dave's words came back to me, "The flies make some difference, but the key thing is a good presentation." Alas, I had no idea what presentation to make. I tried  $\frac{1}{4}$  upstream, sink, and swing. Also straight out, taut, and swing. I was quite confident that I had no idea what to do when my alarm summoned me to hightail it home before the guests arrived. I only wish our guests could have enjoyed the intoxicating North Cascades on such a rare day.

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As luck would have it, I was able to corner Dave the next day after tennis and over a draft beer at The Channel Marker, he explained the presentation of the fly that I should have used. We don't think anyone hooked a fish, but everyone certainly enjoyed getting out there. Dave's main suggestion was to have the fly in the water more and less in the air. Minimize false casts and don't "aerialize" a heavy streamer fly. After this outing, I feel like a whole new territory and time of year for fishing has opened up!

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## Lone Lake Outing, April 13, 2024 – Wytold Lebing and Nick Sherman

### From Wytold

I was a little concerned as I rode the Mukilteo Ferry over to Whidbey Island in the morning on April 13<sup>th</sup>. The weather forecasters were predicting a windy day. Lone Lake is unprotected on two sides and strong winds can make the fishing difficult and coupled with 50-degree water downright uncomfortable. Yet about a dozen NFA members and a couple of guests showed for the Saturday outing. We're a hardy bunch when there's fish to be caught.

But to everyone's delight the forecasters were way off. It was sunny and warm with light winds all day. The fish seemed to enjoy the weather too. Almost everyone caught some fish. Chironomids and trolling both produced fish, with the former being a bit more effective. There wasn't much surface action. I had been told that the lake had been stocked the previous Wednesday. So, I brought a 4-wt. expecting to find 10" fish. The 10" fish may have been there, but I hooked a couple of big resident rainbows which were almost too much to handle with the light rod and a click pawl reel.

Hats off to Dan Hall who seemed to out fish everyone. We all noticed him pulling in nice fish all day long. But everyone still enjoyed the day. It was just the kind of day that when you're packing everything to head home you keep thinking "I'll be back."

### From Nick

Wytold Lebing hosted the day trip over to Whidbey Island to the very popular Lone Lake. Several fly-fishing clubs enjoyed the crisp, breezy spring day. Wytold made a preliminary trip two days earlier to scout and reported several fat fish on chironomids. Leeches and wooly buggers are good bets as well.



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Host Wytold with his kayak.

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Peter Rubenstein with a well-equipped float tube.

Tom Quinn started early and had a nice rainbow on a woolly bugger or leech type pattern, as did his friend. Wytold stuck with chironomids and had a solid day from his kayak. Vance Thompson was trying out a new camera while joining the flotilla of boats fishing chironomids off the west shore, hooking one for a fine jump and long-distance release. Joel Theil had a nice strike from his pontoon boat that unfortunately resulted in his fly box going overboard. Luckily, he has taken the fly-tying class and can rearm. Susanne Staats tried out her shiny new inflatable kayak Aquaglide Chelan 120. Susanne rapidly inflated the craft with her powerful Seamax Marine lithium air compressor. I know I missed some people as it was hard to tell our club members from others.

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Wytold lebing with new member Joel Theil.

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Our fearless President Wayne Balsiger with his always shipshape pontoon boat. Note the Thistle license plate – Wayne’s class of sailboat.





Brett Schormann, Kathy Sherman, and Susanne Staats with Susanne's before inflating Susanne's kayak.

Kathy and I used a sinking line (brown leech for her and olive leech for me) and kicked our float tubes down the east side of the lake, avoiding the chironomid fishermen on the west side. We also avoided the fish that way. My best catch was after Kathy snagged an abandoned fishing line. In the interest of saving wildlife from entanglement, I pulled up the line and retrieved a fishing rod. My hopes for a nice fly rod and reel were dashed – alas, it was a spinning rod. Kathy hooked two trout to claim family honors again.

I saw several people in the chironomid flotilla haul in sizeable fish, so I consulted Peter and Wytold on the proper rig and technique. I got the scoop from this guy (Dan as it turns out) fishing with his dog and catching many. I went back out after lunch and (probably rudely) anchored up next to Wytold and this guy in a square

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aluminum duck boat craft. He was smoking a cigar and fishing two rods, just laying a chironomid out there and setting the rod down. The indicator would go under, he'd pick up the rod and land a powerful rainbow. By the time he released that fish, his other rod would have one. I watched him catch a dozen fish in the space of two or three cigars. Meanwhile in the near vicinity, three other boats and I caught nothing. It was an awesome display of calmness and success.



Dan and dog, using a #16 chironomid. Ten percent of the anglers catch ninety percent of the fish.

I caught up with cigar man in the parking lot. Modestly, he said this was his day – “it’s not often like that” (which I don’t believe for a second). He used all black chironomids, or silver, white, and some other color. He said the secret today was size – a #16 hook. Vance talked to Dan with the dog (the other person reeling in multiple trout) who also said size 16 was the ticket.

Lone Lake makes for a nice day trip. Afterwards, you can always head into Langley to browse the quaint shops. Kathy and I grabbed prime seats at the bar at Saltwater Fish House and Oyster Bar. A Manny’s Pale Ale goes very well with excellent Deer Creek oysters and makes it tolerable to be with a spouse who caught all the fish.



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## Fly Fishing Fair set for May 4 at Ballinger Park



Fly fishing and fly casting are the focus of a day-long Fly-Casting Fair Saturday, May 4 at Ballinger Park in Mountlake Terrace, and the public is welcome.

Running from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the fair is hosted by the Washington Council of Fly Fishers International (FFI) and the City of Mountlake Terrace. It offers a range of free activities to explore fly fishing including casting demonstrations and a walk-in casting clinic. There is also a skills development course and detailed classes in specific casting skills taught by FFI-certified instructors. In addition, FFI will host some of the best fly tiers in the Pacific Northwest in a rotating series of tying demonstrations inside the Lake Ballinger Center.

The introduction to fly tying class is open to youth and adults. Registration is limited, so visit the [Washington State Council FFI website](#) for details and online registration.

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In addition to instruction, you can explore ideas about fishing with conservation and education partners who will be at the event. The Northwest Youth Conservation and Fly-Fishing Academy will have representatives to discuss their week-long summer camp for teenagers. Also attending will be representatives of the Wild Olympics Campaign that is working to protect and restore salmon and steelhead rivers on the Olympic Peninsula and Project Healing Waters, which serves disabled veterans.

Coffee and snacks will be available for sale throughout the day. Participants can order lunch in advance. Lunch will be available beginning at 11:30 a.m.

For details about classes, to purchase a lunch or register, visit:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/washingtonflyfishersinternational/11471>  
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## Fly Tying Class by Maureen Sullivan

David Williams and Eric Olson once again taught the 2024 NWFA Fly Tying class with much patient instruction and advice. Students were introduced to at least two new fly patterns; materials supplied every week. Some students were novices, and others returned for another year. This class brings together all sorts of flyfishing people. Most everyone had an opinion about where or how to fish a pattern, and this class makes it possible to tie almost all the flies for the upcoming outings. Flyfishing can be overwhelming in the beginning and listening to David and Eric review basic food sources (beetles!), wet and dry techniques and fishing spots very much helped.



David reveals the secrets of poly yarn.

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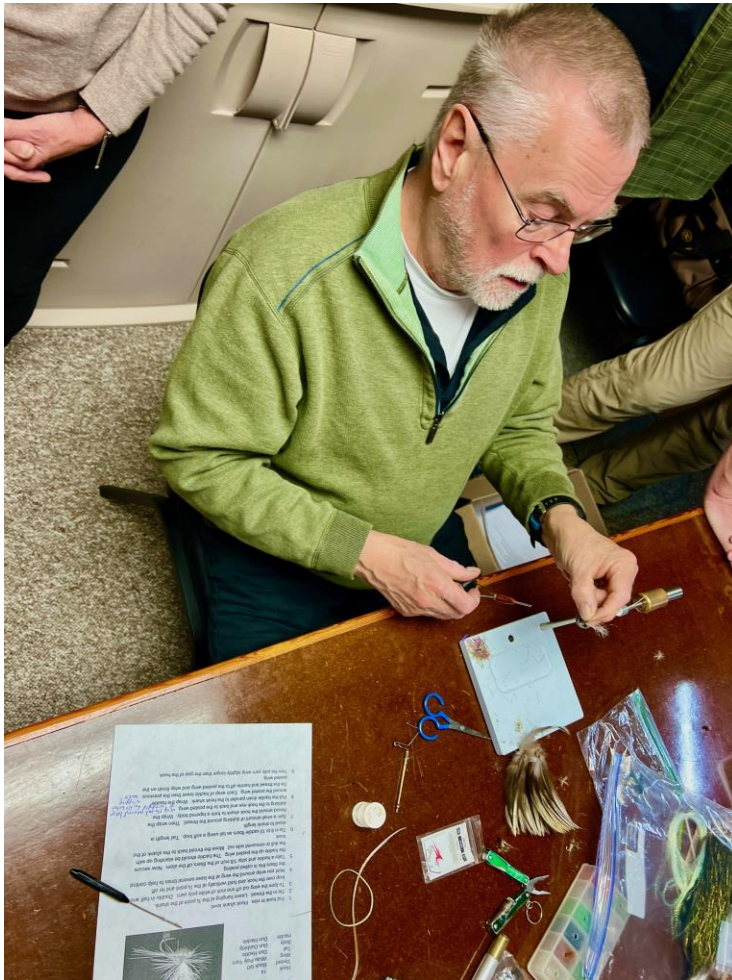




Dori Massing appreciated “the organized and focused approach to class prep done by the organizers and the attention to detail. Not only in the instruction but in the historical references and anecdotes.” There were many anecdotes, and as is typical when fish are involved, snakes, bears, moose, cougars, and wild turkeys crowded the rivers and streams. (Note that a #12 chironomid with a white bead, peacock herl, and black and silver abdomen should be fished in lakes where there are snakes in the water). Joel Thiel noted that “learning tips on fishing these, the peacock herl winding trick, Eric’s duct tape repair, and all the rattlesnake experiences” added to the six weeks of class.

One challenge shared by students is spinning dubbing sparsely. Erik’s tying lesson for the BH Gold Rib Hare’s Ear clearly illustrated how fine dubbing allowed a more realistic buildup of the abdomen. Many of the Hare’s Ear flies tied by students were radiant in a nimbus of overdubbing. Fine dubbing is tricky, but with the Dun Parachute’s complications of a poly yarn posted wing, then hackle spun round, there was some forgiveness in dubbing lumps along the hook. David was going to teach post wings with calf tail, which is traditional, but there was much complaint, thus the polywing.

Students brought a wide range of vises and tools, which motivated those of us holding onto vises purchased by their grandfather at Warshals to consider moving up rather than tack welding the post to the clamp again. Sharing “his enjoyment with the class and the time to get acquainted with new members, “Scott McCracken wrote. “I recently replaced my 20-year-old HMH vice with a “new and improved” model that I thought was quite a technological breakthrough in vice design. To my surprise most of the class members had similar vices and made me realize how out of touch I’ve become. I guess the most interesting fly-tying technique I observed in class was Eric’s inserting a tiny bead onto a hook in the palm of his hand.



Eric, Dun Parachute

One fly pattern, and the methodology of procuring materials, stand out. David Williams shared what, at first sight, resembled blue amoebic pseudopods. However, this is a highly successful fly tied from Chenille car mitts. The simplicity is scary-and you can always borrow a different colored mitt from an unlocked car at the pullout!

Beverly Sanders, a new fly tyer, summarized the class most succinctly. “I loved the art of fly tying. The community of classmates was top-notch. I looked forward to coming to class each week to create and share and make beautiful things. It was a great experience that I would love to do again.”

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## Float Tube Forum 3 - “How to” for beginners who want to get out on the water by Nick Sherman

You have your float tube and have learned how to fish from it. So where do you go to branch out?

### Day Outings

WDFW.wa.gov has a useful tool for finding lowland lakes. Search on a lake and you will find a description and information about the boat launch and parking. If gasoline motors are prohibited, it is catch and release, and it is fly fish only, you have the Holy Grail for float tube lakes. More likely you will fish “put and take” stocked lakes along with spin casters and bait fisherman. You can learn what the open season is, the lake’s acreage, a map with the depth profile, and directions. While on the WDFW site, you can check when the trout plants occurred. This is a two-edged sword - planted fish bring crowds, but greatly increase the odds of hooking something.

I live in Edmonds, so I tend to go north of the city. Green Lake is an excellent place to try. I found a parking place and launched from shore, so I don’t know the normal put-in places. Green Lake was memorable because I was caught out on the lake with lightning dancing around me in one of the few thunderstorms I’ve ever seen in Seattle.

Ballinger Lake is open year-round, making it a good spot to start the spring season. Martha Lake (Alderwood) can be very crowded, but for good reason. There are many fish planted and it is a promising place for larger holdovers. Martha has many ospreys. Lake Serene is small, but very convenient to me. It is quite pretty and has resident eagles. Tye Lake in Monroe is open year-round, and my leech fly yielded large holdovers when the spin casters were getting 10 inches. Popular Langlois Lake, site of many NFA outings, is quite pretty and I’ve had success there in May. These are just a handful of many possibilities - ask around and get suggestions.

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Catch and Release Fly Fish Only lakes are a whole different story. You will be with your fellow fly anglers, and you can learn a lot just by talking to people on the water or in the parking lot. Pass Lake in Deception Pass State Park was my favorite lake ever a few years ago, when all fish were 14 to 18 inches - fat rainbows with the occasional brown trout. Ten fish days were typical with twenty if you stayed long enough. Resident eagles make determined plays for your released fish and any hooked jumping rainbow is fair game for them. The Shrimp Shack nearby is a must visit outdoor eatery. Alas, something has happened (I've heard toxic algae) and the fishing slowed considerably in the last three years. Pass Lake was closed off and on in 2023 and I cannot tell if the lake is open now. If you go up there and Pass Lake is closed, move on down across Deception Pass to Cranberry Lake in the same park. Also, Rosario Head is a beautiful 20-minute walk with spectacular views of Puget Sound.

Lone Lake on Whidbey Island requires a ferry trip unless you go all the way around through Anacortes. Like Pass Lake, it can hold large trout and is a popular destination for fly fishing clubs. I caught three large rainbows one trip and was skunked on another. That's fishing...

## **Overnight Trips**

Somebody said that 90% of the fishermen are west of the Cascades and 90% of the trout are east of the Cascades. These eastern lakes are managed differently. Rather than plant 5,000 ten-inch trout that are put in and taken out almost immediately, eastern lakes are planted with small fry that (due to low fishing pressure and catch and release or limited limits) will grow to large trout. Even medium 13-to-15-inch trout are healthy and fight hard.

A nice outing can be to wade the Yakima (or hire a guide to take you down in a drift boat) for a day. Then seek out a lake. The seeps lakes have lots of options. Lenice is a favorite of many. It requires carrying your float tube a half mile from the parking lot. You can put the float tube in a large backpack along with a pump or inflate your tube at the car and carry it on your back. I ordered pack straps to attach to the float tube that makes it comfortable. You will have lots of company, but the fishing should be good. Bear in mind that June through August are probably way too hot to be enjoyable.

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A float tube double at Lenice Lake.



Lenice Lake, caught with an olive leech on a sinking line.

I have not been to Nunally but intend to. It is similar to Lenice and requires you to carry in your gear. Tiny Quail Lake involved a walk in, made much longer when I lost my way. We had excellent fishing for a few hours.

Chopaka, Dry Falls, and Coffeepot Lake have been popular NFA destinations. While there are not great numbers, Kathy caught her biggest trout ever at Dry Falls. I watched a man catch fish after fish on Chironomids in Chopaka in May. I had one of my favorite days ever at Coffeepot Lake in early May, although late May a year later yielded nothing and a stop in September was completely useless due to weeds. Talk to club members about good times to go.

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Kathy's biggest trout ever at Dry Falls. Even the ranger was impressed by this picture.

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Chopaka Lake, yet I still was out fished by my wife and certainly by the chironomid anglers.

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Coffeepot Lake. I went two hours without a strike and then enjoyed one of my favorite days ever in a float tube.

If you are a strong hiker, packing your float tube way down (and back up) the hill into the east end of Dusty Lake is rewarding. The hike is amazing with basalt columns on two sides of the lake. The rainbows are 13 - 15 inches but fight like tigers.



The hike down into Dusty Lake is challenging, but this is a beautiful place considering no-one has ever heard of it.

## **Southward**

Leach Lake (and nearby Dog Lake) near White Pass can be worked into a trip to Mount Rainier. NFA has had outings to Munn Lake and Coldwater Lake at Mount

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St. Helens (I'm hoping to try these). Mixed in with a trip to Bend, Oregon, I enjoyed Lava Lake and East Lake at Newberry Volcano.

With a float tube, a whole lot of possibilities open up. You can escape the shoreline and practice your casting without snagging. You can get out on the lakes where the fish are. Lakes don't have the romance or beauty of making a drag-free cast in a mountain stream, but you can learn how to land a fish, sometimes big fish. If you like to hike, you can leave the anglers with heavier gear behind. But if you find the wind bothers you and you'd like to cover more of the lake, you're ready to look at pontoon boats and fishing rafts. That is the next article once we find someone to write it.



## Leech Out Those Walleye by Mark Connor

Every year, my cousin, his Minnesota friends, and I fished for walleye in White Otter Lake, Ontario. For us, the fish were not meat but a delicacy. When we caught fish, we sated our appetites first and then canned the rest for the cold months.

Otter is in Quetico Provincial Park, 258 kilometers, a little north of west of Thunder Bay. The road to Otter ends at Clearwater West Lake.

In Clearwater, we trained up three deeply v-hulled Lunds, the 16-footer towing the fourteen and then a twelve, for the eight miles to the easy 300-foot portage to Otter. Once there, the twelve trailed the fourteen for twenty miles across the lake to, you guessed it, Walleye Bay. The smaller boat was stashed up at Emery Lake for a trout-catching diversion when the walleye were not biting.

Portage day entailed too much work to be a fishing day, but we fished all the days after that. The method for catching Walleye had been passed down for several generations: slow troll with weighted minnows, boat stern first, outboard engaged in reverse, throttle set at idle. The motto was, “You cannot troll for walleye slow enough.”

One evening at camp, an active 80-year-old professor and his three sons, all Ph.Ds. in their 40s, came to fish these special waters. The family got together for a fishing trip to some exotic location every summer. They fished Otter with leeches. Privately, we screwed up our faces at the thought of those slimy creatures.

Late the following morning, we motored by the family as they napped under their oilskins; hapless, we were sure. The bite was on the moment we hit Walleye Bay—I mean *really* on. Our party limited out at 45 fish—the smallest three lbs. and the largest six. Strung out on an oar, they got to swinging so badly that two of us had difficulty carrying them over the portage.

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Etiquette dictated that we visit the icehouse before we brought up our big fish so as not to embarrass the others on the lake. Our jaws dropped when we saw what the professor and his three sons caught. Their smallest fish was bigger than our largest. There was a run on leeches at the bait shack that night.

Two evenings later, a few city slicker fly fishermen from Minneapolis showed up. No one bothered to talk with them about their plans. Surely, they needed bait to attract walleye.

The following day was a skunk day for us. George and I retired to Emery to fish for brook trout. On our return, motoring down the lake, we heard no outboards but a lot of shouting and hooting. There they were, the fly anglers catching walleye, literally hand over fist, one right after the other. Wait a minute, the bite was off that day. What was the deal?

Now, we engaged them in conversation. They were using leech flies, here for the peace and tranquility of Quetico. The only excitement that they craved was 'fish on.' The anglers ever so slowly stripped their sinking line. They moved silently from angling spot to another casting location with oars. The sports released every fish they brought to hand to be caught again, only keeping enough for dinner. They always caught fish; bite on or off, it did not matter. Eschewing the hassle of a fish finder, these fly fishers preferred to let the fish find them. The fishers slowed their retrieval if the catching was not fast and furious at the start. If that did not work, they speeded up the strip or let the line sink deeper. Or resorted to a heavier line. Rarely did they change the leech fly – it always seemed to work. Where they fished did not matter as much as the presentation since walleye did a lot of cruising. If not cruising, they hid in ambush or fed on the bottom. But they would rise to an undulating leech. Or when they are in one of their elaborate courtship rituals.

Arriving the following year, everyone in our group had purchased flyfishing gear and an assortment of leech flies. And learned casting and line management at our local fly shops.

*Flypaper*



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