



TIGHTLINES

Sky survives OFF's "pounding."



Eric Sauer photos

"The weather was so nice I didn't even care if I fished."

Steve Murray

An avid steelheader might have stayed home to work in the yard.

It wasn't windy, raining, hailing, snowing or cold. Instead, it was bright and sunny. People were happy. They were smiling and thinking about Spring. Not perfect steelheading weather, but a perfect day for a float down a fine steelheading river with friends.

Twelve Olympic Fly Fishers gathered at Petosa's Restaurant in Monroe at 7 a.m. on February 11th to plan their strategy for Eric Sauer's Fifth Annual float of the Skykomish River.

As Eric often points out: "This outing isn't necessarily about catching a lot of fish. It's about camaraderie and fishing with friends."

This year, the trip scored high on camaraderie and so so on catching.

"We met early for breakfast and talked about ...*Continued on Page 2*

Get the latest on hot North Central Washington lakes and rivers at the March 8th meeting.

The Washington counties of Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan make up the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Region 2 and include some of the best lake and stream fishing in the State.

At this month's OFF meeting, Joe Miller, the Region's new

Fishing Programs Manager and two biologists, Bob Jateff and Jeff Korth will tell the club about some exciting warm water opportunities for the 2006 Season.

"Rainbow, Brown, Tiger, Brook, Lahontan and West Slope Cutthroat Trout are all available in Region 2 lakes as well as Large

Calendar

Meetings:

March 8: General Meeting

Guest Speakers: WDFW Region 2 fisheries biologists Bob Jateff & Jeff Korth and new Fisheries Program Manager Joe Miller. See Story below.

March 22: Board Meeting

Special Events:

Mar 1, Apr 5: (Last two sessions) Fly Tying Round Table, 7 - 9 p.m. Frances Anderson Center, Edmonds, Room 302.

Mar 7: (Last session) Beginning Fly Tying, 7 - 9 p.m. Edmonds Plaza Room (above Library).

Outings:

March 16: Float and/or wade the Yakima River. Hosted by Joe Conner 425-744-8085. Meet for breakfast at the Cottage Cafe, 911 E. 1st Street, Cle Elum, 8 a.m.

April 29: Blue Lake. Hosted by Mike Truax 425-672-6963.

Upcoming Speakers:

April 12: Dave McCoy, Emerald Water Anglers.

May 10: STS Guide Service "Lower B.C. Lakes and streams."

June 14: Writer, conservationist & respected fly fisherman Les Johnson, author of *Fly Fishing for Coastal Cutthroat Trout*.

and Smallmouth Bass, Bluegill and Crappies." says Jateff, who works out of the Okanogan Office. "We'll be talking about planting programs, what to expect opening day, better times to fish and, if you like Bass fishing with poppers we'll let you in on a good*Continued on Page 4*



Skykomish from Page 1... fishing, work, and got to know each other,” says Eric. “About 8 a.m. we hit the road. After dropping off the downstream cars at the Ben Howard access we proceeded to the Sportsman’s Park in Sultan to launch.”

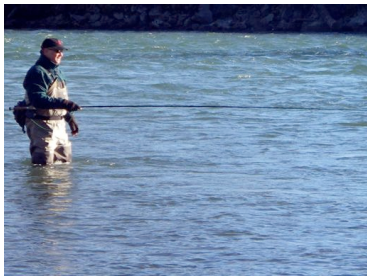
Joe Conner, Doug Pendleton, and Jim Melnick launched in Joe’s boat. Eric, Lyle Chrisman, and Hal Rowe in Eric’s boat.



Steve Murray, Buzz Burgett, & Randy Sobzack (not shown), floating the river in their pontoon boats.

Renegade Drifters

According to the “Official Log” Jim Traner proved to be a maverick ship captain who decided to launch his inflatable boat at High Bridge (further up stream from Sportsman’s Park) and float to Sultan with a crew consisting of Bill MacDonald and Mike Truax. That stretch of the Sky was moving a lot faster than the lower section below Sportsman’s Park.



Pendleton works the spey.

“We took the scenic tour and had a wonderful time,” said Mike. “Saw an eagle and a big deer. There’s hardly any development on that stretch until you get down to Sultan.” Mike did admit that the water was moving fast. “Jim convinced us to take wading staffs and we were glad we did. All the holes we wanted to fish were open but it was difficult wading on those large cobblestones.”

Mike said he caught one 11 inch trout. “I was all tensed up for a steelhead hit and yanked it right out of the water.”

(Editor’s Note: The “Official Log” notes that the renegade drifters led by Jim Traner got skunked, or at best caught a Rainbow with parr marks. This discrep-

ancy may need to be resolved during “Fishing Reports” at the next meeting.”)

A hookup and a riverside lunch

Around 1 p.m., Eric and his crew went ahead to prepare lunch on an island downstream of the Two-bit hole. Meanwhile, Doug Pendleton hooked up with a steelie near the Two-bit hole tail out.

“This was a witnessed hookup, unlike a certain hookup that an un-named member got last year, and was undeniably a fish.” says Eric. “Jim Melnick claims he actually saw the fish and stakes his reputation on this report. There were several other alleged momentary hookups throughout the day.”



Eric prepares hot lunch.

For Doug, it was the first time he’d ever hooked a steelhead on the Skykomish.

“I was using my spey rod and was finally getting the hang of it after embarrassing myself on a trip to Alaska a few weeks ago,” Doug said. “I didn’t really care about catching fish just wanted to learn how to thoroughly work an area. I’d had a couple of bumps, maybe. Then I felt another bump, waited a few seconds and set the hook.”

Doug had a couple of looks at a nice 24 inch steelie before it charged upstream rolled and spit the hook. That didn’t seem to bother Doug though, he was just happy to be fishing.

“What was most fun was hooking up with people who love being out on the river. What a great bunch of guys. The last thing I expected was somebody cooking lunch for us.”

And that’s another part of the Sky outing tradition. Eric’s wife was out of town so the vittles were plain as compared to previous years, claims Eric, but you couldn’t tell by the way they were disappearing. Lunch consisted of beef stew, summer sausage, buttered rolls, cookies, and oranges.

...Continued next page.



Joe Cummings: risk taker in a tough business.

When you've fly fished as long as most OFF members there's a good chance you've met a few guides along the way. And there's a good chance that few, if any, were like Joe Cummings.

Joe, who spoke to the Club at the February meeting, owns *A Classic Journey Outfitters* in Missoula, Montana, and guides on such fabled waters as the Missouri, Bitterroot, Clark Fork and Rock Creek.

What sets Joe apart from his peers is that he operates by a set of principles some guides might consider "risky." Instead of going out to catch as many fish as possible on whatever fly fishing tactic is working that day, Joe sets out to guide his clients to specific fish that are rising.

"We're dry fly guides first and foremost," says Joe. "The year round hatches on our rivers present unparalleled opportunities for sight fishing and stalking Montana trout."

If your client only cares about going back home and bragging to his buddies about catching 30 fish in one afternoon on the Bitterroot, he probably won't be too thrilled about spending a lot of time stalking, and then properly presenting, a dry fly to a single fish. But Joe's not afraid to take a few risks in the hope of winning a few converts. He's taken risks before.

...Skykomish from Page 2

"Everyone was in good spirits for lunch following Doug's hookup," Eric reports. "Once the appetites were suppressed, fishing continued. We managed to get the last boat out of the water just as the last of the daylight winked out."

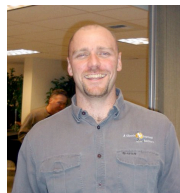
Bud Camandona had to bow out of the trip this year and everyone missed the libations at the end of the day that have also become part of the tradition. Eric had the final word on the float:

"Everyone had a great time. This is just the ticket for a get together in the slow days of winter. If you haven't gone on this outing before, determine now to do so next year. Oh yeah...those renegades on the upper river got skunked

A big smile from Lyle. (and missed lunch). However, they too had a beautiful day, with some troublesome wind, and enjoyed themselves tremendously!"



He grew up in the Missoula area went off to the University of Wyoming after high school. But instead of returning to the family ranch after his stint at UW, he joined up with a big game outfitter in Sitka, Alaska.



With three years of hunting and fishing up North under his belt, he came back to the lower 48 and was drafted by the San Diego Chargers.

"My rookie year was 1996 with the *Joe Cummings* Chargers," Joe says. "Then in 1998 and 1999 I played middle linebacker for the Buffalo Bills." After the Bills, he spent three more years in the now defunct XFL before hanging up his jersey and coming home.

Back in Missoula Joe found a small fly shop up for sale and bought it. The shop didn't pan out but it did give him a chance to do some guiding, and that's where he found his true calling.

"The ultimate moment in fly fishing for me is when I can put a client on a trophy fish and that client performs perfectly," says Joe. "I like guiding more than fishing."

Now some skeptics might say "all guides will give you that line." But consider this, Joe was on the water 138 days last season and only fished two of those days himself. Now that's someone who's either a major masochist or truly loves guiding.

To better understand Joe's preference for the dry fly it helps to know that he's a disciple of the late Gary LaFontaine and his angling "Bible" is LaFontaine's book *The Dry Fly, New Angles*.

(Note: If you read The Dry Fly, you may become a disciple, too. It's the first fly fishing book I've read that addresses the reasons "why" fish rise, take or refuse certain fly patterns at certain times. This book will make you a better and more informed angler.)

Here's what Joe says about the Missouri:

"This is the sight fishing capitol of the West and probably the world. Although it's technical at times, headhunting with dries is always our first choices. We like to say there is a fish rising somewhere on the Missouri every day of the year."

And chances are good that if you take a trip with him, Joe will find that fish and quite a few more like it. Learn more at www.classicjourneyoutfitters.com.

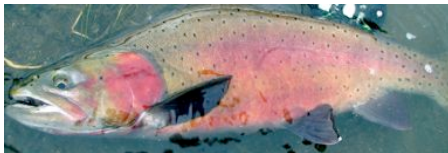
Dick Simmons



The OFF Beat

WDFW from Page 1....

warm water Bass and Bluegill lake that does real well on poppers.”
(Editor’s note: The name of this lake is being withheld to protect its innocence. But Bob will be happy share it with you on March 8.)



Region 2 Lahonton Cutthroat

There are plenty of other excellent warm water and small stream opportunities in Region 2 so this is a meeting you won’t want to miss.

Yakima time is the right time.

Kick off the season with a float or wade on the Yakima. You may be fishing to a Golden Stones hatch with size 8 and 10 Stimulators or a Baetis hatch with size 18 and 20 Blue Winged Olives. You can expect some action. Joe Conner is hosting the trip and it begins at 8 a.m. March 16th at the Cottage Cafe, 911 E 1st, Cle Elum.

Have a heyday at Spey Days.

If you’re ready to “get speyed” you won’t want to miss Spey Days 2006 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on March 18 & 19 at High Bridge/Big Eddy Park on the Skykomish, 8 miles east of Sultan on Highway 2.

This two day seminar is free and will feature casting demonstrations by Simon Gawesworth, Steve Choate, Ed Ward, Dana Sturn, Scott O’Donnell, Mike McCune, Nobou Nodera, Al Buhr and George Cook.

Dozens of rods will be set up for test casting and manufacturers’

reps from Scott, Loomis, Winston Sage, Simms and others will be on hand to answer questions.

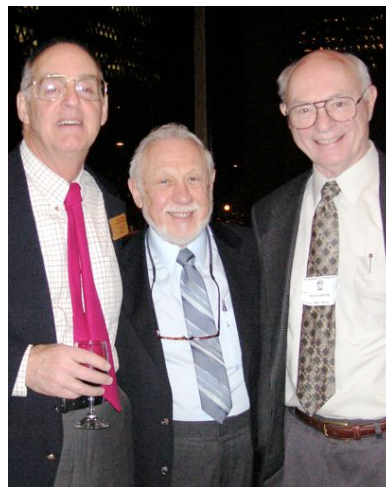
Free lunch, (courtesy of Sage, George Cook, Rio, and Mike Peruse of Loomis), free coffee (courtesy of Starbucks and Kaufmann’s), and free parking (with your current Washington Fishing License. Otherwise, it’s \$5.00). Kaufmann’s is hosting the event.

OFF 2006 Budget passes.

“Do we just want to be like a bunch of old farts sitting around looking at our money?”

That rhetorical question was about all it took to get unanimous approval of the OFF 2006 budget at the February meeting.

In addition to a “Rainy Day Fund,” the budget’s major items include auction merchandise, funding for a new PA system and other audio visual upgrades, guest speakers, improvements to the website, and a heated storage unit.



Jim Gauntt photo
OFF’s Ray Gould (right) is congratulated by Washington Fly Fishing Club’s Hugh Clark (left) and WFFC and OFF member Perry Barth at the Letcher Lambuth Award ceremony. The Award

is given annually by the WFFC for “significant and lasting contributions to the art of fly fishing.” For more information about Ray and the Lambuth Award please see articles in the January and February TIGHTLINES.



General Information

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 PM

The Board meeting is held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Alfys on 196th Avenue, Lynnwood, WA. Dinner at 6:30 PM

Officers:

- Joe Conner, President, 425-744-8085
- Don Summers, Vice President, 206-935-1194
- Bud Camandona, Secretary, 425-337-5840
- Mike Bunney, Treasurer, 425-672-3345
- Dick Simmons, Communications Dir. & TIGHTLINES Ed. 424-778-9804
- Phil Sacks, Gillie 425-741-7311
- Steve Murray, Trustee, 360-422-7335
- Dan Reynolds, Outings, 425-673-7028

Chairs:

- Eric Sauer, Education, 425-776-3811
- Fran Fatigati, Conservation, 425-485-1975

E- mail Contacts:

General:
contact@olympicflyfish.com

TIGHTLINES:
news@olympicflyfish.com

Olympic Fly Fishers
P.O. Box 148
Edmonds, WA 98020