

Fish, Clam, Jig, Or Just Count Birds This February

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : February 2, 2012 at 5:09 am

Now that the big January storm has passed, early signs of spring have begun to appear in many parts of the state. The days are getting longer, spring chinook salmon are moving up the Columbia River, and bluebirds have been spotted in several areas. Then again, many lakes in eastern Washington are still iced over, and the winter whitefish season is reaching its peak. Winter isn't prime time for most fisheries, but the action should start to pick up this month, for example, the spring chinook fishery in the lower Columbia River started getting pretty darn good around Valentine's Day last year, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

State fishery managers also point to several other good fishing opportunities available this month:

Steelhead: Beginning Feb. 16, anglers can catch and keep a wild steelhead on one of eight rivers on the Olympic Peninsula. The Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers are the only rivers in Washington where wild steelhead may be retained.

Razor clams: An evening dig is tentatively scheduled Feb. 18-19 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Mocrocks beaches. WDFW will announce the final word on that dig once marine toxin tests are completed about a week ahead of time.

Squid: This is also prime time to jig for squid in Puget Sound. Good spots include the Elliot Bay Pier in Seattle, the Edmonds Pier, the Point Defiance Park Pier in Tacoma, and the Indianola Pier in Kitsap County.

Rather count birds for science? All it takes is 15 minutes of your time to contribute to the Great Backyard Bird Count, an annual survey of birds sighted throughout North America. From Feb. 17-20, birders of all levels of experience are invited to count the number of birds they see in a 15-minute period and enter their tally, by species, online at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. Participants can conduct their count in their own backyards, in a neighborhood park or anywhere they choose.

The snow cover remaining in many parts of the state has also made it easier to spot large animals — particularly deer, elk, and moose, said WDFW wildlife biologist Woody Myers. He suggests watching for those animals near forest cover early in the morning and late afternoon. Look, but keep your distance, it's important to avoid disturbing animals that are under stress from limited food sources, cold temperatures, and snow cover. Myers said.

At WDFW's Oak Creek Wildlife Area, more than 400 elk and 150 bighorn sheep are on display daily when they congregate to feed on alfalfa hay and pellets near the area headquarters 15 miles northwest of Yakima. The elk usually feed from 1-3 p.m. daily, while the sheep dine in mid-morning.

For more information about these and other opportunities to enjoy Washington's great outdoors, see the Weekender Regional Reports posted on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/weekender/>. These reports are updated throughout the month to provide current information about recreational opportunities around the state.