

Four Days Of Spring Steelheading

This past week I took a trip to Michigan for some spring steelhead fishing. I have never fished for them in the spring, so this was going to be a new experience for me. Lucky for me I have a good friend up there that has a ton of experience and is an excellent fisherman and sportsman. I met Barry two years ago when he helped me land a big beautiful male that was coloring up quite a bit for a fall fish. Apparently this guy had been in the river for a while, because the fresh runs are totally silver. Anyway, Barry and I fished together for a while that day and the next couple of days we met on the river and fished together some more. Ever since then we have been good friends and landed several nice fish together. His knowledge of the river and where the fish are holding is amazing.

Leaving Missouri and arriving in Michigan, 11 hours later was like night and day. When I left it was about 70 degrees. When I got there, the parking lots had snow plowed up in piles that were 8 feet high. There was snow on the ground and the temps were in the high 30s during the day and 20s at night. The forecast was for 40-50 degrees during the day and 30s at high... with the hard wind, rain, and sleet it wasn't going to be 50.. they said it was, but I can tell you it wasn't. I knew it was going to be cold and I took the appropriate clothing for maximum comfort. I checked the local fishing report when I arrived and found out that the water temperature was 38 degrees. Ideally it should be in the mid 40s for good steelhead activity. It was looking like my trip was going to be a lot of casting and not much catching.

The first day on the water proved to be just that. After 12 hours of fishing I had three fish on and landed a total of ONE. A female that took my Estaz egg pattern. It was difficult taking photos by myself without a net. I used a landing glove so I wouldn't have to carry a net around. I do A LOT of walking when I go up there to fish and it

does make it a little easier when I don't have that large net to carry around.

Barry and I were going to float the next day, so I was hoping that he could help me improve my hook ups. Barry has a nice little drift boat that works great for two people. It will sit 3, but that makes it pretty crowded. His boat is light enough that he can handle it himself when he floats alone, which he does on a regular basis. There is no substitute for time on water if you want to learn where the fish like to hang out. Barry knocked on my door at 5:30 AM, which was a surprise, since we had agreed to meet at 6:30... I rushed around getting my things together and told him I would meet him at the put in. We got started just about daylight and it didn't take too long before the first fish was in the boat. I picked up a nice silver fish, and Barry caught a couple more. We got a photo of a nice colored up male I took in a fast run. Then we hooked up with some smaller fish including some rainbow and brown trout. I lost a big brown and Barry landed two more big fish before the day was over. A nice colored hen and a not so nice looking male that had seen better days. We didn't get photos of all of them, but 11 fish in the boat is an excellent day of steelhead fishing. I only contributed to 2 of the 11. I managed to lose more than I should have, but that says a lot about my experience with this powerful fish. If you don't get the hook in solid and keep them from the large amount of timber in the stream, the steelhead are going to win most of the battles getting off or breaking off. As we were driving back from our float I noticed the time on Barry's dashboard clock. That was when I realized why he knocked on my door at 5:30. Michigan is an hour ahead of us and I forgot to reset my watch. We used my watch to tell time all day... no wonder we got home in the dark.



© 27 inch PM Steelhead



© First big fish of the float



© Not a big one, but it was clean and a pretty fish



© Nice hen with good colors



f © The last big fish of the float



© The first nice fish I took on the third day



© A hen about 6 pounds - fog on the lens



red lined male

© This was a pretty double



fish

© Underwater shot of the same



© This was the last fish of the trip.

I had a great time and ended up landing 11 out of 23 hookups. I counted my first run fish in that total, but Barry doesn't count his. Maybe after I get more experience and confidence I can increase my goals to another level. Maybe next year, but for now I'm counting them all. I am already looking forward to our trip next fall. I love catching these fish because of their power and their great leaping ability. They are magnificent creatures.