

Steelhead Trip 2018

Day 1

12 hour shifts two weeks in a row doesn't give a person a lot of energy to row a boat. So I told my friend Barry to sleep in and meet me at the river whenever he gets there. I had a place in mind and after my conversation with him it confirmed that it was where I was thinking of starting too. When I got to the spot there were several Coho Salmon spawning, so I figured there had to be Steelhead here below them. I picked out a likely looking bucket and had a take on the first cast. A few casts later it took again and this time I hooked up. It wasn't big, maybe 5 or 6 pounds so I could handle it pretty easy. I picked up another small one about 2 pounds a little further down and then nothing. Barry called to find out where I was and showed up a few minutes later. We fished that stretch hard with nothing to show for it except another small one that Barry caught. We walked down to a turn in the river and a high bank that had some deeper water, nothing going on there so we moved further down and found more Coho spawning. Barry set up in a nice funnel and I walked down to a deep holding pool. I picked up a couple of brown trout. Barry landed two nice Steelhead in the 5-8 pound range. We crossed the river fished a few places with no luck and finally found more Coho spawning. Barry caught two in a snaggy run and fortunately they were smaller ones so he could keep them from getting tangled up on the roots and trees. We fished a couple more spots before we stopped for a late lunch. We decided on moving up the river to try a couple of areas where we have had success in the past. We did a lot of casting and came up blank except for one small one I hooked, played for a while and made a long release. Hot Venison stew was sounding like a better idea so we ended the day with marginal success.

Day 2

We had decided the night before to try our luck with a drift a lot further downstream. The runs and holes were shorter and shallower, but there just may be some holding up waiting for more high water. The first cast in the first run produced a take and a miss on my part a couple of casts later and took again and I boated a small first run up river "Skippy", name given to the small steelhead that make their first run back up the river where they were hatched. They range anywhere from 1 to 3 or 4 pounds. The next was a hole that produced two nice steelhead for Barry of which both broke off. I didn't get a take except for a brown trout. We drifted down to a high bank turn and I hooked up on big one the first cast. Apparently I didn't have my drag set right and it broke me off on a hard run. Barry picked up a Skippy and I caught one and then nothing. We fished another deep pool and on the tail out Barry hooked another Skippy. We moved down to a deeper run where Barry has had success in the past. He hooked and lost a big one that I saw roll, then I caught a small one. He hooked another big one that took him way down the river and into a sunken tree. These smaller runs and holes had fish, but they also had a lot of snags that were easy for the fish to find. We drifted down to the next spot and I picked up a Skippy immediately. Barry hooked and lost another big fish that took him into the same sunken tree where he had just lost a fish. I had a take and after a long fight managed to boat an 8 pounder. Barry hooked up with a Skippy at the tail of the hole and then I hooked another big one that just happened to find the same sunken tree. That made three fish lost to that damn tree. We fished the spot a little longer and Barry was able to put nice chrome in the boat that weighed about 7 or 8 pounds. Then nothing for about two hours so we decided to go back up the river and do a walk in. We caught nothing the rest of the day. It was time to head to the cabin and chow down on some excellent chili and have a beer or two.



Day 3

We decided the night before to make the long float since we had not fished that stretch of the river yet. When we got to the boat launch there were two other boats ahead of us. We were not in hurry so we let them move on. We floated a long way and finally found some gravel where we could have a chance of getting a steelhead, but nothing but trout were willing to take our offerings. We stopped above a nice deep run with good cover where we had caught steelhead in the past. My float went down and I was into a nice fish. It rolled and we both knew it has huge and all I could think of was don't break don't off. It made a couple of runs toward the far bank and I could feel the line rubbing on something and just knew it was a matter of time before the line would snap, but it didn't. I finally got it to the boat and Barry made a great dip. It was a long and deep male with color signifying that it had been in the river for a few weeks. Barry was guessing 17+ but the bogagrip said 16 on the nose. My largest Steelhead ever was a pound over my long time goal of 15. We took photos and let it go. For me the trip could have ended right then and I would have been more than satisfied.



We continued to fish the run and couldn't come up with another one so we moved on. We found some great looking spots, but no steelhead. Barry caught an excellent brown trout that would have gone about 3 pounds and we both caught a bunch of smaller trout, but that was it. We drifted a long way without seeing any spawning salmon. There were plenty making a run up stream, but nothing on gravel. I saw a few steelhead dart out from under the boat and we fished to them, but had no takes. We got down to an area where we had success the day before. I hooked up with a Skippy and lost another one that felt a little bigger. We slid the boat over and Barry hooked into a big one that took him into a snag, he handed me the rod and moved the boat down so we could get it out of the snag. It swam out, I handed the rod back to Barry and I netted it for him. A nice fresh chrome about 8 pounds. I made three or four casts and turned a big one. Then Barry had another one on about the same size as the one he had just caught. I netted it and we released it. I hooked up with a nice one on the far bank and it was about the same size as the two that Barry had landed. Then it all ended, no more takes. We drifted on because the day was getting late and we had a lot of water to cover. I offered to row and give him a break, but he said he was fine. We decided to make a few casts to spots and if there wasn't a take to move on convincing ourselves that if they were there they would take quickly. I stood up most of the time looking for fish as Barry rowed us down the river. We stopped at a reliable spot and I turned a nice one, but it wouldn't come back for another take. I hooked a Skippy out of a deep clay pocket and released it. That was it for that hole, disappointed we moved on to our challenge hole where there are always salmon spawning this time of the year. We got nothing again so we drifted down a little further below the gravel. Casting back to the far bank Barry hooked up on small one, and I hooked up on a small one that was about 3 pounds, then Barry came up with another one about the same size. We were hooking them in the exact same spot where I had hooked two nice ones on my first drift with Barry several years ago. Maybe this bank was the spot where we should fish the challenge hole. The bite stopped and the light was fading, time to head home for some lasagna and a warm fire.

Day 4

Our plan for day four was to split the day between the two areas where we had had the most success. Drift the lower section in the morning and walk in to the area where we had hook ups the day before. The Skippy's cooperated in the first couple of spots and Barry put a nice 6 pounder in the net at the short hole. We moved down to where I broke off a big one a couple of days prior, but we didn't get any takes. Moving on to the run where Barry had broken off a couple he hooked up a huge one that took him way down the river and I thought it was gone, but he worked it back up and was getting it close when it went under a snag and broke him off. I caught a small one and released it and then Barry was into another big one that ended up breaking off too. I turned a big one but the hook came out. Barry landed a nice 8-9 pounder which we took photos of and released it. Then I hooked up on very big one that took me way down stream and into sunken brush. Barry was nice enough to row us down to the fish, and I didn't think there was any way it was coming out of there, but it did and we netted it. A nice double digit female with a little bit of color.



Barry rowed back up to our original spot, but the bite ended so we moved on to another spot where we had hooked fish two days earlier. Nothing, not a single take did we get. We tried a couple more spots, but got the same results. It was time for us to row out and eat some lunch and head back up stream. When I got to the parking lot I looked for the sunglasses I had lost a couple of days earlier, but they weren't there. I hope someone found them and are making good use out of them. They were my favorite pair and served me well for several years. We ate our sandwiches guzzled our drinks and headed out to the spot where we knew we would find steelhead. We fished up stream for a little while and I foul hooked a big male king salmon. There was no landing this beast with an 8lb leader so I held on tight to the spool and broke it off. We moved down stream where Barry hooked and landed a Skippy and I hooked and landed a Skippy that I had hooked on the first day of the trip. This one had two large cuts on its belly and was only about 30 yards from where I had hooked it the first day, so it had to be the same fish. Barry suggested that the cuts may have been caused from a pike. We crossed the stream and I set up in a great looking feeding funnel, but only came up a nice brown trout. We decided to move down to the spot where we had success the day before. Barry hooked up on the first cast and it was a

nice 8 pounder. I cast to the same spot and I hooked up on one a little smaller. Barry walked back up to the hole make a cast and hooked up again with another one about the same size. He landed it and I walked up to the spot and made at least a dozen casts with nothing to show for it. Barry watching me shrugged his shoulders, walked up to the hole made one cast and hooked another one. This was unbelievable, he had made three casts and hooked three, this one was little larger so we took a photo and let it go.



I continued to work the hole and Barry moved down stream, he took two more from a deep holding pool with a ton of snags. I moved down to where he was and didn't get a take, but he hooked another one above the hole that took him under a tree. He couldn't go any further, so I waded out and he handed me the rod below the tree. I held on until he could walk around the tree and take the rod back. It was another excellent steelhead around 8 pounds. I didn't get any takes so I walked back up stream and fished the same hole where we had all the hookups. I had a take at the tail of the hole and was into a big one. After a lot of head banging and strong runs I managed to slide her to the bank. She was a great looking double digit fresh chrome photo worthy. I decided that I was finished with that one and put my rod away. It was a great way to end another excellent trip. The light was fading and I needed to get back to pack for the trip home the next morning.

