THE OSPREY

A Newsletter Published by the Steelhead Committee,
Northwest Regional Council of the
Federation of Fly Fishers

Issue No. 3 -- January 1988

OVERVIEW

by Bob Arnold

The operative word this year was drought. That and late returns of weak runs of steelhead in most rivers. This being a bad year -- and to smaller than usual -- rivers normally with good runs of two- and three-salt fish reported one-year fish dominating. That is, there were fewer big fish. And, on the Columbia, fish held in the reservoirs until too late in the year for good fishing, they may be over-wintering in the Columbia and Snake, and will run up their natural rivers on the spring freshet, which means most of them will be lost to angling -- at least, as unspawned fish.

Several publications are sent to us on a complimentary basis. From the newsletter of the Steelhead Society of B.C. we note an intense effort is going on to protect the Stelth River from logging. We sympathize with you, as our own old growth disappears. And we've learned from the British Columbia Sportsman, the magazine of the B.C. Wildlife Federation, that a recent survey of their membership indicates that 71 percent support catch-and-release fishing, while they are about evenly divided on the issue of whether to produce more hatchery fish or to depend on natural production. We conclude that they like the bonus of hatchery fish, but often put them back. It's the same way down here.

We note in passing the death of Ken Milwood, pioneer flyfisher from Seattle, in October. Ken's many contributions to the sport have been acknowledged elsewhere, but one of his last acts was to donate files to help the FFF Steelhead Committee raise money to publish The Osprey. Others who have helped us include Curt Beardles, Walt Johnson, Ralph Wahl, George Crandell, Marty Sherman, the Overlake Fly Fishing Club, Paul Smalek, and Bill Hamilton.

This is the third issue of The Osprey and thus far we have been able to meet the expense of publishing it from money provided by the Federation, from a number of unsolicited donations, and by the staff kicking in to make up a deficit. We would like to continue much as at present, but getting a bit thicker, by relying mainly on donations. If you find The Osprey sufficiently informative and worthwhile, you are invited to send in a contribution, any amount will be welcome. This money will help pay for printing and postage; the staff, of course, is unsalaried and all of the articles are donated. Whether or not you contribute, you will receive The Osprey for now.

Our objective is to reach out to all dedicated steelhead flyfishers, wherever they live, and help keep them informed about what's happening. And if you aren't interested in receiving it, but are getting it, send us your name and we'll take you off the list and save a little money. Contributions can be mailed to either Bob Arnold, 2916 N.E. 60th, Seattle, WA 98115 or to Stan Young, 1411 86th Avenue N.E., Bellevue, WA 98004. We are the editors.

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING, NATIONAL STEELHEAD COMMITTEE

At the FFF Northwest Regional Council's conclave in Olympia, last September, enough of us were present that we could have a meeting of the National Steelhead Committee. Attending were George Johnson, national chair; Bill McMillan from Southwest Washington; Marty Sherman, from Oregon; Alec Jackson, of the Deer Creek Restoration Fund, Bob Arnold, NW steelhead chair, and John Sager, Washington Council's legislative representative. Johnson, McMillan, and Sherman provided the conclave's steelhead program and slide shows.

Topics discussed and tentatively agreed upon include the importance of continuing publication of The Osprey and seeing it evolve, some fine day, into a full-fledged magazine similar to the Atlantic Salmon Journal. Marty Sherman, who is editor of Flyfishing magazine, offered his full support in reaching this goal. We decided to work for representatives in all geographic areas that have steelhead -- often states, but more likely smaller areas -- and ask them to organize informal, grass-roots groups in cooperation with FFF councils and clubs. They would report their activities annually or more often for inclusion in The Osprey. We discussed the need for a solid funding base and the possibility some day of having a salaried national director. As Yeats said, "in dreams begin responsibilities."
CATCH AND RELEASE BATTLES ON

by George Johnson

Last spring saw the resolution of a major conflict on the Clearwater River in Idaho. A group of guides distributed a petition to eliminate catch-and-release regulations during September and October. The petition was favored by over 400 signatures. That petition was countered by a petition distributed by the Steelhead Committee requesting the Idaho Fish and Game Commission (IFGC) to continue established catch-and-release regulations. It was signed by over 2000 concerned anglers. The IFGC followed the petitions with public meetings to determine the sentiment of local anglers. These meetings were well attended and over 75 percent supported catch and release. Last spring, the IFGC held a small group meeting to iron out the differences between the guides and fishing groups. Their agreement was confirmed through the 1989 season.

A similar battle was waged on the Grande Ronde. The Washington Department of Wildlife proposed the elimination of all catch-and-release regulations. Thanks to a concentrated effort of the Steelhead Committee and individuals, Wildlife decided that the lower 2.5 miles will remain catch and release. The regulation will apply to the 1988 and 1989 seasons.

Over 65 percent of the steelhead coming over Hermelton Dam in August this year were of wild or natural origin. Catch and release adds to the number of these fish successfully spawning.

ROUNDER

Snake River System
by Steve Patitt

A combination of factors helped produce a significant reduction in Snake River steelhead escapement. The Lower Granite count was 56,250, some 83,000 short of the number at the same date a year ago. The E-group, destined for the Clearwater, was expected to be in jeopardy, based on the poor return of one-half fish last year. The cause appears to be poor outmigrating conditions in 1985. The severe drought experienced throughout the Columbia drainage this season has hurt both A and E-run fish destined for Idaho's Snake River tributaries. Thermal problems in both lower Columbia and Snake River reservoirs delayed the migration and will likely result in high losses. In addition, commercial gill netting by tribal fishermen accounted for 66,000 steelhead in 1987. This may have contributed to a higher than normal "drop out" or net loss of fish during the long duration of elevated water temperatures.

The end result of these impacts has been a dismal flyfishing season. For all practical purposes, the two-week catch-and-release season on the Clearwater was a complete bust, since the bulk of the fish were just then crossing Joe Harbor Dam. Flyfishermen who stuck it out measured their success in grapes per week, rather than fish landed or hours fished per fish. The hope is that the lack of fish was due to the poor 1985 smolt survival and 1987 drought conditions, and not to an increasing proportion of the returning fish choosing to remain and overwinter in the reservoirs.

Conditions on the Snake River between Lewiston and the Grande Ronde weren't much better during most of October. Catch rates were dismal through late October from temperatures above 65 degrees F. But in November fishermen experienced fair levels of success. On the Salmon River, with limited flyfishing, reports have been discouraging. Mike Sider of Salmon reports that the early fish were wild, and by the time the fish did arrive the water temperatures had dropped into the low 40 degrees F. This allowed the action for the floating-line fishermen.

There is a year of another below normal snow pack because of the drought, which will have the 1988 juvenile outmigration. Fishers should begin communicating with their representatives on the Northwest Power Planning Council (NPPC) and insist that they put teeth into the water-budget measure for this coming spring. Along the same lines, Marty Sherman urges flyfishers to contact the NPPC about the lack of emphasis on wild fish in planning for the entire Columbia River, especially on the Yakima and Klackitat Rivers. Ron Eggars, who is in their Fish and Wildlife division, says that the policy people have received practically no public input. Write them or your representative: Suite 1100, 850 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97205.

Southwest Washington
by Bill McMillan

Both the 1986-87 winter and the seemingly endless 1987 summer provided weather phenomena to set memory by. The winter weather was so mild and streamflows so stable that other than for the constant gray skies, leafless trees, and regular drizzle the angler might assume that the fall of 1986 had evolved into the spring of 1987, bypassing winter entirely. And the summer of 1987 began in April and persisted well into November, with streamflows the lowest on record.

The mild winter provided excellent steelhead fly-fishing conditions from December through April. Optimum-to-excellent fly-fishing flow occurred with water temperatures that were rarely below 37 degrees F, and commonly in the low to mid-40s range. March and April temperatures ranged from the mid-40s to that magic number, 50 degrees. These water/weather conditions, combined with good returns of steelhead (thanks to wild
catch-and-release regulations on the Washougal all year, the Grays in the winter, and most other SW Washington streams beginning in April, provided some of the best winter fly-fishing opportunities available in recent years.

While the summer of 1987 will linger in memory for its pleasant weather, the fly fishing for summer steelhead in SW Washington was entirely forgettable. Much of the blame can be traced directly to steelhead management over the previous 10-15 years. Although weather and water conditions were ideal from March through mid-June, the combined movement patterns and numbers of hatchery steelhead resulted in poor angling due to years of genetic hatchery selection on Skamania-stock steelhead that have developed altered late-migrant timing, rapid in-river travel, and large-sized, pool-bound individuals. By the time these hatchery steelhead arrived in SW Washington rivers, despite their relatively good numbers, they provided little legal angling due to the drought-level streamflows that began in late June and continued into November.

IBD disease and increased albinism again hit the Skamania hatchery, with all exposed smolts planted into the Washougal River, rather than dispersed into the other usual SW Washington rivers. Thirty years of intensive genetic selection has damaged the hatchery brood stock. An investigation by the Clark-Skamania Flyfishers concludes that the Wells hatchery (upper Columbia) inadvertently mixed stocks with the Skamania hatchery (lower Columbia) back in the late 1970s and this led to a Skamania stock that is no longer genetically representative of its lower Columbia heritage and may provide a link to its low resistance to IBD in the 1980s.

The one bright spot was an increasing return of early "springer" wild summer steelhead provided by the wild catch-and-release regulations that protect these fish on most SW Washington rivers. Certainly this major management change (first implemented on the Willamette in 1982 and on other SW rivers in 1985) bodes well for future angling during the spring/early summer season on these rivers, where springers historically provided significant native/wild returns. However, by these historical standards the wild-springer return remains critically depressed due to many years of over-harvest through the long angling season, and as yet even the benefits of the catch-and-release regulations fail to provide for predictable expectations. An approach toward historical numbers will likely take two full generations (mid-to-late 1990s), although angling comparable to the 1960s should be expected by the first generation return in the early 1990s. (The 1987 drought-flow impacts on rearing juveniles may delay that expected increase by a year or two.) Due to earlier implementation of catch and release on the Willamette, the return to historical numbers can be expected sooner, that steady progress in restoration of wild steelhead on the Willamette is being made has been documented by smolt surveys of the Clark-Skamania Flyfishers that began in 1985. There remains considerable hope for future summer seasons.

Northern Washington

Olympic Peninsula

Glenn Gallison reports that this was not a good year for summer-run on most rivers. There were poor returns to the Quinault, Bogachiel, Soleduck, and Elwha, and only a little bit better on the Hoh. A few late fish continued to trickle in during October and November, and very low water extended the fly-fishing season. Locals from Forks, who really knew the water, found a few fish.

The Peninsula Guide Association raised funds and contrived time and materials to construct a new steelhead hatchery near the Slider Ranger Station on the Soleduck. The objective was to raise 100,000 smolts from wild Soleduck stock. They took 100,000 eggs in spring from line-caught, large-sized steelhead, but had problems in transporting the eggs to Wildlife hatcheries, and were able to raise only 10,000 fingerlings in their pond.

Seattle Area

The winter season was poor to fair on most Puget Sound streams. The North Fork of the Stillaguamish was a complete bust, partly due to dirty water from slides but also reportedly from Indian overfishing. The late winter or early spring fishing on other rivers was lates, and many fishermen reeled in in mid-April, which is about the time it picked up. The Sauk was good when it came back in after going out. The last week in April, those still fishing the Skykomish had excellent fishing. (The spring season on these two streams is entirely catch and release.)

The summer season found fish returning late to drought conditions. The Skokomish was better than the Sky, we hear, but the slickers took fish out of both rivers, usually at daybreak. The Still had a lot of seared in June and July, but turned good in August and early September. It being a humpy year complicated things and increased the snagging problem. The good news was, the Stilly had a strong return of wild fish. But later in the year, electrofishing on Deer Creek produced a very low count of one-plus-year steelhead -- 0.14% per square meter. This is about half of last year's count, and at this rate the run will be extinct by the mid-1990s.

Wenatchee

The Wenatchee followed the pattern of other upper Columbia and Snake river fisheries, with low water lasting throughout the season and elevated temperatures until the end of October, when they dropped abruptly. A few skilled fishermen who stayed near the mouth took fish, but most others had little success.

Oregon

Marty Sherman cautions us that he fishes only a handful of rivers in his state and his report, consequently, may not be representative. He says mid-December and early January provided plenty of steelhead in all of the north coast and metro-area rivers. The Sandy had winter-runs by mid-November. The Sandy, Clackamas, and Eagle Creek had fish throughout the season. The lower Clackamas is big and strong, and is not
the most inviting water for flyfishers. In January, Marty and friends had some good fishing, in spite of freezing daytime temperatures.

Late winter and early summer fishing on the Oregon coast saw very few fish, but summer rains were beginning to show fairly well in May and June in the Clackamas and Sandy. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were concerned, however, that few two-salt fish were in the run. Counts at Willamette Falls were down from the previous year. The tributaries had good numbers of fish.

The Deschutes was good again, with lots of fish. But Marty's success was spotty. Ratios of 7-1 and 11-1 wild fish were a good sign. Counts at Bonneville Dam were down 50,000 fish from 1986 and guides were complaining about the bad fishing. Heavy jet-boat traffic added to the problem.

Canada

by Dean Young

1987 was a year of weather extremes in British Columbia. Either it was raining too much or not enough. As a result fishing was horrendous most of the time, according to Oscar Moorehouse. An almost never-ending series of storms the first half of the year all but wiped out the winter season. Then, as if to make amends, it hardly rained again until late in the fall over much of the province. Rivers shrunk until they were little more than tepid trickles. The exception was the Skeena River area of the extreme north, which was subjected to record rainfall during the prime fishing month of September. Not only was the Kispiox unfishable much of the month (no surprise), but even such usually dependable rivers as the Worris and Bulkley were high and dirty. Eventually the weather began to improve and those fishermen who timed their trips right had excellent late fall fishing on those three rivers and also the Thompson.

NOTE: We are seeking correspondents from Canada and the Great Lakes area who can give us accurate reports. Please contact the editors.

DEER CREEK UPDATE

For the first several years, the people participating in the Deer Creek Policy Group could find no rehabilitation projects that stood a chance of withstanding the winter floods in this ruined watershed. This fall, however, work began on several projects that probably will hold up and be continued in following years. Alex Jackson, who holds the PFF seat and heads the Deer Creek Restoration Pard, was in charge of these. The first involved the purchase of twelve Jersey barriers -- those cement dividers you see along highways being worked on -- which were helicoptered into the remote middle stretch of Little Deer Creek, the principal tributary and the one in which the largest concentration of spawning white has been indentified. These were positioned at points where the stream channel is badly undercutting its banks and eating into the blue-clay deposits that are causing turbidity and reducing spawning/rearing capability. The barriers were put in place and fixed there with cables and I-beams so they would not wash away. The project was designed by the U.S. Forest Service and paid for cooperatively by the Restoration Pard and Georgia Pacific. If this new technique proves successful, it will be used elsewhere in the basin and on applicable parts of the North Fork of the Stellagamous, which has similar problems of streambank instability.

Alex led a work party of individuals and members of the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers on a weekend effort to build sediment fences on Forest Service land in the vicinity of Segalson Pass on upper Deer Creek, where there is a large unstable area that is sliding and putting silt into the creek. There are many such slides above the infamous DeForest Creek one, which is now of epic dimension but shows signs of drying up. These slides are largely the result of Forest Service clearcuts back in the 1970s. In the fall of 1986, the Forest Service agreed to a indefinite halt to all timber sales in the basin, and has requested and spent funds for road and streambank rehabilitation. More cooperative efforts are planned for 1988, involving the PFF, Wildlife, and Forest Service.

TIMBER PRACTICES

by Bob Arnold

Scott Paper Company surprised nobody in the Deer Creek Group by going ahead and clearcutting their lands less than a mile from the mouth of Deer Creek, leaving only a fifty-foot wide buffer strip along 650 feet of bank from which they are planning on removing most trees. Even without cutting, this bank is crumbling into the creek. This they did after being advised not to by participants from Wildlife, Fisheries, TU, PFF, Washington Environmental Council, Stellagamous Tribe, and others.

Actions such as this one by Scott make fishermen cynical and doubtful of future planning efforts involving the tribes and timber companies. Yet the PFF will persist in trying to work with others because the risks of not doing so seem greater. All around us there are Deer Creeks in the making. Reports from other favorite streams -- the Sauk and Skagit, the Skykomish, the Ronde, to name a few -- show similar degradation from clearcut logging and road building on steep slopes and from the sediment load that results. We know too well what this does to the propagation of anadromous fishes. So people concerned about fish and what's happening to their habitat need to attend public meetings that are dull and conflict-ridden, and put in tedious hours in committee meetings that could be spent fishing enjoyably. The alternative is, go fishing and watch your stream fill up with silt and logging debris.
IMPLICATIONS OF DEER CREEK
by Bob Arnold

The timber companies are slow in getting the message and dispute it, when we tell then the lesson learned at Deer Creek. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) seems especially bad in this regard. Their individual foresters argue at public hearings that clearcutting adjacent to streams does not harm them and that reduced fish counts are the results of over-fishing. They do not address downstream effects of their cuts or the cumulative effects of their and others actions in a watershed. They continue to plan timber sales to remove trees right down to the edge of slopes and streams because "they'll just blow down and the revenues be lost." They believe in their "mandate" to provide the maximum revenue from the state lands under their trust; the fact that this money helps fund the schools throughout the state makes them less及righteous. Yet there are contrary forces at work, organizations and political groups that tell them they can fulfill their mandate only if they protect the fish and wildlife, which are also state natural resources.

To add to the individual forester's very understandable confusion, there are programs such as the Forest Land Management Plan and Timber/Fish/Wildlife that DNR is committed to. Their foresters (many of whom are nice guys who love fishing, outdoors and fishing in their spare time) are being pulled in two directions at once by their directives to cut every marketable tree "for the sake of the little children" but to show restraint, even if it costs the state a few dollars, for the sake of the birds, deer, fish, and clean water. It must be hard to walk in their hobnailed boots, these days.

OLYMPIA THINKS US
by Bob Arnold

In mid-August, while fishing below the mouth of Deer Creek, I noticed a dead steelhead, which was unusual. After I found another, then two more, I became alarmed. Some of the fish showed hook marks in their mouths. Because of the drought, high temperatures (above 70 degrees), and greatly reduced holding water, the fish were being badly stressed; this year here was intentional dragging going on, as well. Mangles in the river added to the problem.

I brought the problem to the attention of the Steelhead Committee the same night and we agreed to ask the Department of Wildlife for an emergency closure. It should last, we thought, until we had some rain and the accumulated dead steelhead escaped into the sanctuary of Deer Creek. The next morning, a Saturday, I called the Area Biologist, Curt Kremer. Though it was his day off, Curt raced to the river and conducted an inspection of his own. He found substantially what I did. On Monday morning, he met with the Regional Biologist and the Habitat Biologist and the Acting Regional Manager; all agreed that an emergency closure was in order and one would be requested of Olympia.

By Wednesday, Olympia had decided against the request. The Steelhead Committee protested in writing. "Inadequate data" was given as their reason; also the fact that the Columbia River has similar temperatures each year. (Of course, the Columbia has deep reservoirs that are cold at the bottom in which the fish can hold until tributary temperatures lower enough to entice them out.) Olympia also said a few dead fish was "insignificant," even though the run has shrunk to only a few hundred wild fish and no fish kills have been reported in the past.

About the same time, Bill McKean wrote Wildlife in protest over opening both White Salmon Rivers to a wild fish take because large numbers of wild fish were returning than were expected. It seemed our two requests had a common concern, namely, that maximum escapement of wild fish receive priority attention, and that decisions regarding them be made on the regional level, not in Olympia, by the people who are closest at hand and know the situation best. So a third letter went out. Once more Olympia said they knew best. There, for now, the matter rests. We expect to face the same problem each year until the policy is changed.

CLARK-SKAMANIA PROJECTS

The Clark-Skamania Flyfishers continue to show leadership in this complex business of fish management. Recently they have produced two innovative publications. One is a pamphlet called A Wild Fish Story, the result of nine-months gestation. It is a thoughtful analysis from a historical perspective of wild salmon, steelhead, and trout populations. It tells why and how they should be protected and presents the genetic argument against hatchery production. Inquiries are invited. Write P.O. Box 644, Vancouver, WA 98666.

The other publication is a report on fish-watching, a non-consumptive use for fish and one which involves the general public. The idea is similar to the Audubon Society's enjoyment of birds. One activity is watching salmon and steelhead ascending falls. Another is visiting spawning grounds and closely observing what is going on here, fish biologists or knowledgeable flyfishers can work with public groups educationally. This emphasis may help reduce poaching, too.

TOO MANY STEELHEAD?
by Stan Young

Oregon's North Umpqua River with its 32 miles of water reserved for fly fishing only faces an uncertain future because of -- believe it or not -- too many steelhead. Record numbers of summer steelhead have returned to the river in recent years -- 39,000 in 1986 and 20,000 in 1987. The result has been lots of fish, but also a heavy increase in the number of fishermen, including a great many who are more interested in the seat than in the sport and aren't particular how they get their fish. Heavily weighted flies (really lures) have turned the fly-only section of the river into a spin-fisherman's paradise. Strange as it may be, the use of spinning rods is permitted so long as a fly is used. Even the use of bubbles is okay. It's gotten so bad that it's hard to tell where the gear section of the river stops and the fly-only section begins. The quality experience
the river once was so famous for and which attracted fishermen from the world over is no more. What is needed now is a much less active hatchery program — better yet, a total reliance on wild reproduction — and a change in the fishing regulations to rule out the use of spinning rods and bubbles. (Lead-core lines are already forbidden.) Fewer steelhead should mean fewer fishermen, and a return to quality.

STEELHEAD MANAGEMENT INWALD, WASHINGTON
by Stan Young

Again this year the Steelhead Committee submitted comprehensive comments to the Department of Wildlife's proposed fishing regulations, this time for the 1988-89 biennium. Among our general comments were: (1) we were encouraged that the regulations on more and more streams are being changed to require catch and release of wild steelhead and we hope all rivers eventually will be catch and release, especially those with wild populations; (2) we recommended that the daily catch and seasonal catch limits be scaled back from the present two per day and 30 per season to one per day and ten per season, based on our contention that steelhead should be regarded primarily as a sport, rather than a meat, fish; (3) we urged that wild populations of steelhead be permitted to find their own production levels, rather than the state creating artificial ceilings, while recognizing that the Boldt Decision requires adherence to the maximum sustainable harvest concept on treaty rivers; (4) while acknowledging the continuing need for some hatchery production, we stressed that if wild steelhead populations are permitted to realize their full potential levels the present overdependence on hatcheries can be reduced; (5) we noted with satisfaction the trend to extend steelhead seasons on more and more rivers, usually in conjunction with releasing wild fish; (6) we urged better use of emergency actions either to shut down or extend fishing as warranted, and that there should be regional autonomy for such actions; (7) we recommended removing fishing from boats on many smaller rivers and removing fishing from boats with motors where problems with wading anglers keep recurring, such as along the Skagit during the late winter season; (8) we asked for more fly-only waters, in view of the increasing numbers of fly fishermen; (9) we requested the designation of a series of "fish sanctuary areas" to protect critical habitats and races of fish, where fly-fishing only would be permitted.

With respect to specific rivers in the six regions, (1) we urgently requested that there be no change in the catch-and-release status of the lower two and one-half miles and the section from Cougar Creek to the Oregon border of the Grande Ronde; (2) that fishing from boats be disallowed during the March-April catch-and-release season along the Skagit; (3) opposed two-fish limits along the lower Skagit (from the North and South channels upstream to Sedro Woolley) during March and from Sedro Woolley to Bacon Creek March 1-15, supported catch and release from Concrete to Bacon Creek March 15-April 30, except that fishing from boats with motors not be allowed, and requested fly-fishing only during March and April from the Dalles Bridge to Gilliam Creek, a stretch presently closed to fishing during those two months; (4) recommended that the entire Skykomish up to the forks be open to wild release and selective fishing during all of March and April; (5) endorsed fly-fishing only and wild-fish release along the North Fork of the Stillaguamish from the mouth to Swede Haven Bridge March 1 through November, and recommended year-round fly-fishing only and wild release upstream above the Swede Haven Bridge; (6) recommended closing most of Region Five anadromous fish rivers to night fishing and to the taking of wild trout under 20 inches, requiring wild release on the North Fork of the Washougal, managing the Toutle River system exclusively for wild steelhead, closing the wind above Trapper Creek and the East Lewis above Horseshoe Falls to all fishing, and continuing to allow anglers on the Klickitat above the salmon hatchery, (7) proposed making the Bogoehelia wild steelhead release from the hatchery near its mouth to the park boundary during March and April, the Quitait wild release from Lake Quinalt to the park boundary throughout the fishing season and extending the season through April, and the Soleduck wild release from the mouth to the park boundary during March and April.

Although only a few of these recommendations were accepted, we believe them to be reasonable and ecologically sound. We have hopes in the following biennia of more being adopted.

HANFORD REACH OF THE COLUMIA

Legislation has been proposed to have a study made of a 57-mile stretch of the Columbia River, possibly leading to its being added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Introduced in the Senate by Dan Evans and Brock Adams of Washington, the bill provides an eight-year moratorium on attempts by business interests in Washington to have the Corps of Engineers dredge the stretch and thus enable huge ocean-going barges to pass above Richland to Wenatchee. The stretch is still free-flowing and much as it was before the region was settled, with many miles of critical spawning beds for salmon and steelhead which would be lost because of dredging. Senator Evans, due to vacate his seat at the end of next year, said that it is one of the things he wants to get done before he leaves the Senate. In Washington only the Skagit, White Salmon, and Klickitat are included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Inclusion of the Hanford reach would preserve it as free-flowing and save the spawning beds.

SKAGIT WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

The U.S. Forest Service has finally received enough money to hire a part-time river manager in its Sedro Woolley district office for the Skagit Wild and Scenic River. This is an essential first step in enabling the agency to live up to the responsibilities given it by Congress in 1978 to manage carefully and protect the free-flowing qualities of the river and the natural character of its riparian lands. When Congress recognized the superlative recreational qualities of the Skagit by adding it to the national rivers system, it authorized the appropriation of $11.7 million for land acquisition and $33.2 million for development. But so far almost nothing has been provided to the Forest Service for that purpose. A river manager should enable the agency to
identify problems, set priorities, and go to Congress each year with a well-documented justification for the money required to do the job of properly managing and protecting the river.

The Skagit and its Saux tributary once again harbor thriving runs of wild steelhead which are providing rare sport to flyfishers and other anglers. Only if the Forest Service is able to carry out its responsibilities is there any assurance that the world-class fishing may continue. The Steelhead Committee is taking an active part in monitoring the efforts of the Forest Service and in assisting it to get the necessary funds to do its job. The Forest Service initially plans to patrol the river in a new jetboat and to post it as being in the Wild and Scenic System.

16/16 CHZ
by Stan Young

Scott Noble, one of Seattle's better and more innovative steelhead flyfishers, likes to make it tough on himself. Last autumn, using a size 16 dry fly, he rose 2 steelhead, hooked 11 of them, and released eight, all on rivers within 35 miles of home. He used a weight-forward line and a ten-foot leader tapered down to a four-pound test tippet. About one-quarter of the fish came to the fly during the first hour and the balance after it had started to skate. Most were hooked in the angle of the jaw; Scott was careful not to tighten up until the fish had turned. Three of the fish were over 30 inches, with the largest being a 36-inch, 16-pound buck that smacked a skating Steelhead Dry. (The Steelhead Dry is a cross between a Grey Wulff and a Steelhead Bus.)

Scott was pleasantly surprised at how readily the fish came to his tiny flies and how many he was able to hook and land, proving that it isn't essential to use the traditionally large dry flies most believe necessary. Scott was inspired after reading that Lee Wulff had once wished taking an Atlantic salmon of at least 20 pounds on a dry fly no larger than a size 16 -- which he eventually did. Can anyone top a 16-pound steelhead on a size 16 dry?

SEASONAL DRIFT
by Bob Arnold

Has anybody else noticed the seasonal drift? The seasons when steelhead arrive seem to have changed. When I was a boy, winter steelhead fishing didn't begin until New Year's Day. It was entirely for wild fish, then, with the coming of the hatchery fish, they began to arrive earlier. As the years passed, I began to expect a few fish showing up in late November. I remember some good Thanksgivings. Around the first of December, the runs were generally poor, but they built up slowly and I could expect some good fishing commencing about mid-December. Christmas Week was always good, and I planned part of my vacation for then. I averaged half a dozen bright fish, even though the first floodings often occurred then. January was hot, but by early February, the first dark males, then some kests, appeared. There was a tapering off of hatchery runs, but around the 20th of the month on a host of Puget Sound rivers the first runs of wild steelhead -- with some large fish among them -- began to show up. I planned vacation for the last week in February, because often there was a spell of warm weather, low water, and big wild fish. The headwaters usually closed March first, a practice I still think a good idea. In April, everything was closed but the Nisqually, and I never did figure out how to fish it.

In summer, the peak of the run on the Sky and Stillly took place during the second week in July. Vacation time again. When the hatchery programs began in the early 60s, some years there was good fishing at the end of May for fresh hatchery fish, with a few egg-bound winter fish still around and a number of nicely recovered wild kests, usually males. They fought well, and we always put them back. There were some great jams, with 15 to 20 fish hooked. July was breaded out. In August, fishing usually picked up a bit, and at the end of the month a freshet had moved the wild fish up Deer Creek, which benefitted the run. Fishing then went slack until the first hard rains of October, when high water often brought superlative fishing for large, dark hatchery fish. With enough water in the river, the fish held good and by the end of the month we were all looking for the first winter fish, unmistakable because of their incredible brightness. You could spot a man carrying one a quarter of a mile away.

This has all changed. First, in winter, because of the Indian nets targeted on the early returning hatchery fish, there is virtually no December or early January fishing. We all go out, we all try, we all curse and gripe. There are few fish about. Oh, a small run here and there slips through the nets and yields a fish or two, say, on the Sky. I've talked to Terry Williams, Fisheries Manager for the Tulalip Tribes, for several years now, and he assures me that the tribes can adjust their net fishery so that a shot of fish arrives Christmas week, but it never seems to happen. The nets are pulled sometime in January, and everybody watches for the announcement in the newspapers and ventures out on the next high water. Often this proves disappointing. There is usually sparse fishing throughout February; the first wild fish at the end of the month seem to be missing from the rivers I fish.

But by March 1st, catch-and-release regulations go into effect on more and more Puget Sound rivers, along with rules requiring selective gear. That is, no bait. And the good news is that sizable runs of wild fish are showing up in the Sauk, Sungen, Sky, and Stilly. You have to get used to the fact that you can't keep any fish, however. This isn't hard for most flyfishers. Still, it's nice to have a fresh fish for the table, now and then.

The late winter/early spring fishing holds good, generally improving, until the fish are on their redds. Biologists from Wildlife tell us this is no big problem because spawning fish are not inclined to take, but I wonder. Often there is an odd mix at the end of the season of bright wild fish and ones beginning to spawn, making regulations hard to write to protect the resource. Then, in most streams, the fish stop running until the start of the summer season. In the future, rivers will increasingly remain open, with rules in effect to protect the smolt migration. In the past, I think people fishing single eggs for "trout" have hurt the smolts.
It will be interesting to see what a May fishery is like on rivers previously closed. Of course, it will be on a wild-fish-release basis. There is the possibility that fishing for late winter fish near spawning time will turn out to be harmful, in which case the Steelhead Committee will ask for closure.

The true summer fish have been returning later the last couple of years, which has coincided with unusual low-water conditions. In 1986 I had a fair June and July, with a poor August; in 1987, June and July were disastrous for me, but August the best I've experienced, and mostly for wild Deer Creek fish, though their numbers (judging by juvenile counts) are rapidly falling off. Each wild fish I catch I regard reverently, fearing it is the last. Maybe next year the runs will revert to the July peaking. It's too early to try to make a trend out of late returning fish. Anyway, September is almost always poor on West side streams, and my friends and I head East for the Wenatchee, Methow, and Rode, as soon as the weather and reports are encouraging. Around Puget Sound, and I suspect in the Southwest streams, the fall fishing is mainly dependent on water height. This year, with the great drought, the fishing was poor nearly everywhere.

In retrospect, I find I'm catching as many or more fish now than in the past, but at entirely different times of the year. And I'm permitted to keep fewer fish, which doesn't bother me much. So I'm not complaining, only commenting on the nature of change. As I grow older, I get more pleasure out of comparing one year to all the ones before it, as the seasons drift by.

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