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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO STEELHEAD FISHING

TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES

by N. Isaacs

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1. Introduction to the Art of Steelhead Fishing

Steelheads are natives to the waters of the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia and the West Coast of North America. They belong to the same waters as Pacific and Atlantic salmon. They became abundant in Great Lakes in the twentieth century, but were initially put there during the nineteenth century. 'Sea-run Rainbow Trout' was the early common name for Steelheads. Now, however, Steelheads are a very common part of the big Pacific salmon family. Of course, they offer the best eating.

These fish flip across saltwater and tidal streams without any major ripples on water. The silent, swift-moving fish are, by far, the most mysterious. It is difficult even for seasoned fishers to know of their presence and movements.

Steelheads belong to the rainbow trout family. They hatch in rivers, go into lakes and then return in two to four years to lay eggs in same places from which they hatched out. The fish live through their spawning period, return to rivers and lakes and then again come back to lay eggs. The cycle keeps repeating.

Steelheads are huge fish. Adults measure a minimum of four feet and are as wide and solid as an adult human's thigh. They are normally bright crimson in color and are able to sense anglers as far as fifty yards down the river. They can jump up to three feet above the water and normally scare the wits off even a bold and daring angler. Of course, you can come across slightly smaller and less ferocious ones in ponds and canyons.

Steelheads are a rarity and are in high demand among anglers. Besides, it is always a prize catch. Many times, you might receive misguided information

about steelheads from other anglers or locals. All this forms a part of the game for catching steelheads. By nature, steelheads also prefer seclusion.

How to Lay Successful Baits for Steelheads

Steelheads are elusive creatures and laying bait for them can be a really hard task. It is essential for you to become familiar with any river in which you fish. You need to acquire some information and advice from friendly locals. They know 'their' river and the fish in it like the back of their hands. You could also take one of them along on your fishing expeditions. They form excellent guides and helpers.

Steelheads crave freshwater clam flies, so it is prudent for you to catch and preserve them during winter months to be able to use them for baiting steelheads in other months. Normally, the fish do not feed while laying eggs. Therefore, it is not easy to entice them with your bait. You need to go into deep waters for steelhead fishing.

Steelheads can easily swim across nine hundred miles in a day. As they survive spawning, they go back to sea after that. Then, they rest in deep and very slow moving waters. Hence, you need to read sea depths well to fish for steelheads.

These creatures do not move immediately, even after you locate them. They prefer to keep lying down deep. You need to hit them hard on their nose to instill any movement in them. This irritates them and they strike your rod with fury. Such strikes are dangerous and you should be on extra guard while trying to attract or anger steelheads.

You need to be able to differentiate your bait-striking the bottom and steelheads striking at your bait. This depends on the amount of weight on your

bait. You acquire that knowledge and skills with the passage of time and perseverance.

While fishing for steelheads, keep yourself warm and covered with overalls and waterproof boots. Fishing rods need to be around 8/12 to 9 feet long for medium to fast action. Load your bait casting reels with 12-14 pound mono lines, 150-200 yards in length.

Normally, this suffices if you drag well and do not fall into the main current. It is a long wait and you need to have loads of patience to even catch a glimpse of steelhead. You need to cover the total length and breadth of any fishing area before moving to a new one. Steelheads move around in couples or small groups. When you catch one in any fishing area, you are sure to get some more there.

2. How to Catch Your First Steelhead

Fly-fishing for steelheads is an old sport. It is as tough as some fishing guides portray, but it is, most certainly, not impossible.

A trip with a steelhead fly-fishing guide is an excellent way to catch yourself your very first steelhead. These guides take you to areas where there are fish and provide you the right tackle and technique to fish for steelheads. Adopting techniques used by veteran anglers and guides increases your chances of getting more steelheads when you go solo.

Summer-run fish are an easy target, floating near the surface, eager to lunge at your presentation. Winter steelheads are a greater challenge as they are usually close to the bottom and unwilling to come to the cold surface to feed. However, for a start, late winter or early spring is a good time to fish a steelhead.

Fishing for a steelhead requires the correct equipment. A 9 to 10-foot, single-handed 8-weight fly rod is the classic choice for the winter.

Sink-tips for this kind of fishing are broadly classified in two categories. The shorter tips are lighter and designated by numbers such as Type III or Type 5. The longer tips are heavier and classified by their weight-per-foot in grains. Short leaders (between 3 and 6 feet long) are used when fishing for steelheads in the winter.

Once you have the right equipment, you need to get your tactics spot-on. The wet fly swing is the most effective way of presenting. In this swing, you cast the fly downstream and let it swim across the face of the current. A large

variety of fly patterns are available for steelhead fishing, and it is important to make the right choice. Traditional patterns such as Skykomish™ Sunrise patterns are useful in all sorts of water conditions, but modern patterns like rabbit strip leeches are more popular now because of their durability.

Getting your equipment in place is just the start. You must be able to read the water carefully before you will hook a fish. Areas with pockets of water, with boulders obstructing the stream are comfortable areas for steelheads to hold. The best way to hook the fish is to cast your presentation at about a 45-degree angle, right in front of the fish. When you cast downstream, you have to let the sink tip hang downstream on a few feet of running line. Then, you have to roll cast and bring the tip to the surface of the stream, lift it off, and execute a 'back-cast'. The moment the line lands in water, toss a large upstream bend that should allow the fly to sink. As soon as the tug of the line is felt, lower the rod so the fly sinks deep. Swing the lead slowly in the holding water since steelheads have the habit of intercepting during the swing.

When you feel the catch, slacken the rod by keeping it low so the fish does not break the leader. If the steelhead begins to run, let the rod and line weight wear it down. It is a good idea to move with the fish if it tries to run.

It is challenging for first-timers to fly fish a steelhead, but the day you get your first catch, the sense of triumph overwhelms all the difficulties you might have faced.

3. Steelheading Equipment

You must ensure that you have the right equipment for steelhead fishing.

Fishing becomes much easier and more enjoyable if you have the most suitable waders, boots, and socks. It is also important to carry requisite clothes and other accessories like a hat and a pair of sunglasses to cope with the steelhead-fishing season.

Chest waders made from special material like Polychloroprene (for example Neoprene™ stocking chest waders), which protect you from cold water, are ideal for the winter season. In a warmer climate, stocking waders, made from lighter insulating material like Gore-Tex or Hore-Tex, are better because they allow for perspiration. Another option is a pair of quality wader boots. These boots must have a proper sole to avoid slipping on rocks.

Multiple layers of socks keep your feet warm and dry. The outermost layer should be of a waterproof material like Neoprene. Follow it with woolen socks, which help in insulating and keeping your feet warm. In addition, wearing polypropylene socks, available at sporting stores, keeps perspiration away.

Steelhead fishing requires long hours in the water. Therefore, the right clothing is essential. You might need padded collar vests with multiple pockets to carry various items like your mobile phone, knife, camera, heat packs, notepad, etc. A good idea is to use thermal undershirts to keep away the cold. Other essential clothing includes jacket, thermal underwear and gloves to keep you warm and dry.

Last, but not the least, do not forget to carry a hat that keeps you warm in winter and protects you from the rays of the sun. Also keep a pair of sunglasses handy to help avoid the glare and to see the contours of the fish clearly.

The weather during steelhead fishing season can be rough. Meticulous planning helps make it an enjoyable adventure.

4. Best Time of Year for Steelhead Fishing

Steelheads move to various sections of streams in different seasons. If you want to go steelhead fishing, it is important that you know the best time to do it.

During the fall, when days become shorter and cooler, steelheads move closer to shore. Around September, steelheads use runoffs caused by rain to move upstream. One or two-year-old fish, known as 'skippers' or 'jacks', are the first to migrate. These fish take a while to adjust to the new environment and take shelter in holes and pools during this time. If the water is murky, steelheads move closer to the shore but, in clearer waters, they retreat to deeper bottoms.

Winter months are the most challenging for steelhead fishing. Since their metabolic rates dip significantly due to the cold, steelheads are unable to swim against the current and prefer to hold in slower waters. In extreme winters, ice often covers the prime holding areas. It is best to check the temperature before going steelhead fishing in this season. If there is too much ice, it might be better to wait for it to thaw out. Winter afternoons are the best time to fish for steelheads, since the temperature is relatively high. The time of day apart, you need to be careful in picking your bait. Emerald shiners and spawn sacs are your best bet in the winter months. Long colorful streamers are of no use, as steelheads rarely bother chasing these due to their sluggishness.

Come springtime, and steelheads move to fast shallow waters to spawn. Days get longer in the spring and the temperature of the water rises progressively. Steelheads need gravel to spawn, so those areas are the best for fishing. Steelheads lose a lot of energy in spawning and develop an appetite to regain

the lost fat. This is when they are most vulnerable as they are attracted to the presentation and hardly able to defend themselves if caught. One must be careful while fishing these “drop-backs”, as post-spawn steelheads are known, because they can die of stress if fished too many times.

5. How to Read Water and Stream Conditions for Steelhead Fishing

An expert angler knows the water better than the fish. Reading the water is crucial to getting yourself a catch. Steelheads usually seek safety and find themselves a niche which they can hold. Therefore, it is important for you to know the stream and understand stream conditions.

Steelheads often hold in sections of the stream such as pocket water, pools and at the bottom of runs. Rocks obstruct the flow of choppy streams and create pockets of slower water. Rocks deflect water in these “pocket waters”, causing a current break. Steelheads hold behind these rocks or along the seam of the break. Steelheads also hold in pools during the winter and in low water. When the stream reaches softer sections of the bottom and digs out dirt, it forms a relatively slower section of water known as a pool. During winters, the tail end of a pool is an especially good region to fish for steelheads.

One can also find steelheads at the bottom of the runs, relatively fast sections of the stream. Steelheads hold at the bottom of these runs or at the seams of runs and slower adjacent waters. Runs are usually uniform in depth and vary from 2.5 to 7 feet. This depth sometimes camouflages the fish, but this does not mean they are not there. Be on the lookout for merging waters and current breaks, as these are preferred holding areas for steelheads.

Just knowing about water sections where steelhead hold is not enough. These fish inhabit various areas of the stream depending on weather. The temperature of the water, light conditions, flow of water, clarity of the stream and the fishing pressure are other major factors affecting steelhead fishing.

Steelheads, being members of the Salmonid family, prefer water between 45F and 55F. At these temperatures, steelheads are most active and are more likely to hit a presentation. Steelheads are cold-blooded and their metabolic rate slows down in winter. They are harder to catch in this season as they drop to warmer climes of the stream bottom.

You are also more likely to find steelheads in deep waters, as they are sensitive to light and hold deeper to avoid it. On a sunny day, steelheads take shelter in deep holes and in the dark bottoms of riffles. When it is cloudy, steelheads venture into shallow waters. Therefore, the best time to catch a steelhead is either early morning or the late afternoon.

Large schools of steelheads move upstream when freshwater from rainfall or runoffs enter the stream. The holding areas of steelheads also vary according to water levels. When waters are higher, steelheads hold in areas that contain seams caused by breaks in the current. When the water level is lower, steelheads prefer the areas that provide the maximum cover.

Prime time for steelhead fishing is when the clarity of water is between 8 to 15 inches. Steelheads become easy prey when the clarity of water is at the prime condition as they can barely see the presentation and are willing to hit it. If the water is too clear, the steelhead will move to deeper waters to seek cover.

The number of anglers increases the fishing pressure significantly. The fish have a large pick of presentations and may end up ignoring yours. So, if you want to ensure your catch, fish from a location with few anglers already there!

6. Strategies for Catching Steelhead on the River

There cannot be a more attractive gift for a steelhead angler than a catch on the first cast. What makes an angler more successful than the other? What is required to catch more steelheads in fewer casts? Where should you catch steelheads and when?

To be a successful angler, it is important to know where, when and, of course, how to fish for a steelhead.

Steelhead fishing is different from the traditional fishing. For example, as in combat fishing where anglers fish in groups, successful steelhead anglers cast alone - strategically. In addition, the steelhead runs are unlike large salmon runs. Steelheads move in much smaller groups.

Steelhead season begins when salmon anglers start moving out after the fall salmon fishery. Steelheads appear early in the season and the bigger steelheads are caught in the first few weeks of the season. These fish find protection from attackers under various 'structures' such as deep pools, overhanging branches and logs. Steelheads also find protection in 'structures' like choppy waters, cut banks, etc.

An experienced steelhead angler focuses on primary and secondary travel lanes and holding water in the main channel. One should fish in the top section of the run and not cast repeatedly in the same spot. In this manner, fish in each run, place your cast at least twice, and continue down the river in the primary and secondary lanes. Steelheads are fishes of habit. Try to remember the spots where you caught steelheads previously since you may be able to hook another at the same spot.

It might be a good idea to talk to fellow-anglers about their experience; you are bound to learn a lot. If you do not hook a steelhead the first time out, do not worry - luck might favor you better next time.

7. Fly-Fishing for Steelhead

An experienced fly fisher knows what differentiates the steelhead from the resident feeding trout.

Anglers new to winter and summer fly-fishing, face a challenge in identifying the basic traits of this rainbow trout. Steelheads migrate from the sea to the freshwater to spawn. Unlike other fish, steelheads do not return to freshwater to feed. During spawning, their stomach empties to provide space in the body for the roe, which results in alteration of their feeding habits. Then, why do they strike? This is due to some unexplained behavior of these rainbow trout rather than their desire for food.

The angler should observe this change in habit of the steelhead, which returns to freshwater only to spawn, and the other resident trout. Another important observation is the pool and the holding water where the steelhead rests. The steelheads can rest in various areas of the pool. The tailout and the main pool holds the maximum number of steelheads. One can also find a few steelheads at the whitewater head of the pools. Other areas where steelheads find protection are beneath the rocks, water pockets caused by broken water, overhanging trees on the riverbanks, etc. A fallen tree pointing downstream also provides a good slick for the steelhead to rest.

Another area of importance is the way to cast a fly. The fly should not be too high, too low or should not swing too fast. A successful presentation is to use a fast sinking wet-tip line with 2-3 foot leaders. It is important to observe the fly movement across the pool to induce confidence in the presentation offered to the fish.

There is a special zeal for a fly fisher to catch this non-feeding fish with their strange habits. The more that an angler learns about them, the higher the rate of success. A successful steelhead catch is a challenge, which only a fly fisher can appreciate.

8. Useful Tips for Steelhead Fishing

Coaching and tips are never a substitute for experience, but it does help to get a few pointers. Catching a steelhead is about having some luck and lots of technique.

It will help to keep these tactics in mind when you are out there.

To begin with, always remember to cover a large area so you know you do not miss any probable spot where you might find steelheads. Before you go wading in the pool, remember to carry a wading staff fastened to your vest for safety. It is better to carry this staff when you have to wade across the whole stream to get to a better holding ground.

Steelheads usually hold near the bottom of the pool, so make sure you sink your presentation deep. You are most likely to hit a steelhead when your presentation sinks directly in front of it. If there is any unnatural drift on your line, be sure you have hooked something. It might a rock, a log, or some underwater object but could also be a steelhead. Chances are you might find this drift near the tail end of the pool, an area where steelheads prefer to hold.

If you do manage to hook one, you will know soon enough that steelheads leap with considerable pressure. This pressure is enough to snap your line. You must be quick to drop your rod at parallel to the water surface to prevent it from breaking.

There are also times when you might be in situations where your line breaks. Therefore, it helps to carry a Swiss knife or a tool like it with you on every fishing trip. You do not know how useful these can be, from helping you

prevent the line from breaking to carving out a makeshift rod, a Swiss army knife can do it all. Another useful thing to learn before you go fishing is mastering the primary knots. During dawn or dusk, monofilament is hard to see, and it helps if you are a master with your knots, especially the blood knot, the nail knot, and the clinch knot.

It is critical for every fly fisher to know how to read the water. Water sections change spontaneously and steelheads move along these sections in search of the most comfortable holding area. The angler must know the best locations that might hold steelhead and should master their 'home river' first. If you have the location right, but are just not getting a hook on a steelhead, try switching to a drift fishing method. A moving lure, colorful streamers and globballs are often effective, even for the dormant winter steelheads.

When you hook a steelhead, it is a good idea to memorize the exact spot. Steelheads find the most comfortable resting ground and prefer to hold there. It might happen that you detect a nip but miss the catch. Let the area rest and come back after a quarter of an hour to try your luck again. If you hit an effective holding ground, it can be a very productive season for you.

Do not waste your time on unproductive ground. If you have tried all the tricks of the trade and found no fish, you are probably just not looking in the right spot. Move to another location that might yield better results.

An angler must treat the hunt with pride and dignity. So, take pride in your catch and make sure you release the fish gently in the pool, not on the river rock.

9. When and Where to Use Jigs for Steelhead Fishing

Steelheads are some of the most difficult game fish. You cannot be sure what they will fall for and when. However, it does help to carry a selection of jigs in your vest, when you go out fishing. The traditional lead-head jig has lured many fish for years and has now been redesigned to become a marvel in steelhead fishing.

It's natural to be unwilling to adopt a new technique in fishing, but jigs are worth a try – don't just write them off. Jigs are not complicated, their best trait is their simplicity. The effectiveness of jigs comes primarily from the fact that they sink much faster than other baits, increasing the time the bait spends in front of the fish. In traditional steelheading equipment, the weight is over a foot above the hook and takes much longer to sink with every cast. Steelheads are usually found near the bottom of the pool. Getting your bait to them faster can definitely help your chances of hooking a fish.

Another edge which jigs have over other steelhead fishing equipment is that they are fished beneath a float. To begin fishing you simply need to adjust your float so the jig used is about one to three feet above the bottom. This makes them a more accurate and productive delivery system.

Jigs are dressed in rabbit fur and marabou. These materials are light and wiggle in even mild currents. The fishing is even more productive when the jig is used with a piece of bait. Jigs are colorful and rely on good light conditions. This makes them somewhat unsuitable for low visibility and fast pocket water. A good idea is to switch to bait when the visibility drops below two feet. But,

when jigs are dabbed with a dash of scent, they can be an extremely good lure in slow or still water.

It is a good idea to keep in mind the suitability of various kinds of jigs and other equipment to make your fishing experience even more productive. As always, the angler must read the water very well. If the water is low and clear, go for a jig in pale shades. A faded shade of blue, pink, or white might be your best bet here. These jigs must also be small. Large jigs are handy in large rivers with a strong flow. The large jigs should be in bright colors; for example, a quarter ounce marabou jig in hot pink.

Knowing your water conditions also helps decide the best rod and reel combination to use with the jig. For instance, if you are tossing a jig weighing a quarter of a pound, a level-wind reel is the best idea. Similarly, a pencil lead, split shot or slinky is ideal for weighing the float and the jig. The combined weight of the lead and the jig are what allows the float ride at correct level in the water. You must also pay careful attention to the rod used in fishing jigs. Long and lightweight rods help keep your lead out of water when the float begins to wend across the stream. A lightweight line also helps avoid fatigue caused by long hours of fishing. A good casting rod to use is the 10 foot 6 inch Lamiglas™ X106MLC.

One thing to be careful about is that you are bound to lose your jig if you sense that your float never seems to dip or tilts downstream. Jigs have a tendency to bounce along the bottom near the rocks. A good way to avoid losing your jig is to never lower your jig right to the bottom. To make your fishing experience even more fruitful, lengthen the cast slowly and patiently work the entire stretch of the run. Remember; never give up until you are sure that every steelhead in the water has seen your jig at least three times over.

10. River Drift Fishing Techniques

River Drift Fishing is a fishing technique that is gaining popularity amongst both amateurs and the professionals. It increases the chances of success at fishing and therefore attracts more people to try their luck. It is most popular in streams that have pools and rapids. These streams are full of trout, steelhead and salmon that are migrating.

The technique involves casting the drift bobber and sinker upstream, which then flows downstream with the current. Once it flows towards the riverbank, you cast another into the river. The bobber bounces up and down along the bottom of the stream and thus attracts the attention of the fish. The fish could be hungry, protecting itself or curious and may bite the bobber.

Drift fishing requires the right amount of weight while the bobber performs a tap-tap-skip action involving the bobber touching the bottom then rising before touching the bottom again. The drift bobber should have the right weight to make a sinker act.

There are many ways to add weight. The use of pencil lead has proved both successful and economical. Pencil Lead could be either hollow or solid. It is available in coils to allow the user to cut as much as desired. The most popular lead diameter in use is 3/16.

Another popular sinker is the Bouncing Betty which is round and made of rubber. It is available in various sizes and best suited in slow, shallow water.

Due to the continuous action of the bobber, it is sometimes difficult to identify a fish take. A rule of thumb for successful drift fishing is to set the hook at

even the slightest tug. To make sure you know every time that a fish mouths a bobber you can use sharp hooks and add yarn.

A sharp hook is an important part of your fishing gear. To keep your hooks sharp, you can use Luhr Jensen's Sharp Hook File™ that is available in different sizes. You just make one-way strokes on the hook to make a point. The light biting fish will not be able to get a super sharp hook out of its mouth easily and, thus, you feel a stronger take.

Add the yarn ahead of the hook and below the bobber. The yarn adds color, which contrasts with the lure you are using. The fish cannot spit out the hook easily because of the yarn as it entangles in their teeth. To get rid of the yarn and the hook the fish will move even more giving you the signal to set the hook.

An important tip for a successful drift fishing experience is to have the line close to the bottom. For this, choose a line heavier than you use for lake fishing. An example of a good quality line is Trilene™ XT or Berkeley™ Big Game.

Varied products are available for you to try out on your fishing spree. The following are a few examples. Birdy Drifter™ is a bobber suited for both fast and slow water conditions. Bobtail™ is a drift lure available in different colors. Gooley Bob® is a drift lure that resembles a cluster of eggs and thus attracts fish. It is very soft and feels real to the fish, resulting in a harder take. Fat and Fuzzy Yarn® comes with a reusable dispenser and in various colors.

11. Spoon Fishing Technique

There are many techniques that you can try when fishing. One that suits you may not suit another and vice versa. Once you get used to a particular technique, you probably do not hurry to try another. The spoon fishing technique is a unique and successful technique. If the fishing has not been good, go ahead and try this.

Spoon fishing is very effective for steelhead fishing and yields incredible results. To get the right gear for spoon fishing, you first need the right spoons. Good quality spoons made of silver or brass work well. Genuine silver spoons are available at Mortac Tackle in Granite Falls, Washington. Do not go for the chrome-plated spoons that look very similar to the silver-plated ones. These look black inside the water and that does not help in attracting the fish. If fishing in clear water, brass spoons are good. If fishing in off-color water, then silver spoons will look white through the water and flash more than the others. The flashing of the spoon attracts the fish. The spoons are available in various sizes. The 2/5 oz. brass Little Cleo® spoon is a popular choice.

Once you have good spoons with you, change the hooks on these spoons to treble hooks of good quality. The rod length you use should be right to keep the line out of the water and drive the hooks into the jaws of the fish. A heavier line is preferred, as it will help to keep the fish hooked for a longer time.

An important tip, when trying spoon fishing for the first time, is to take it easy and not be too quick. Be patient - cast the spoon across and let it take its time to reach the bottom. Make sure the spoon does not wobble, but spins. Let it drift down easily and do not be in a hurry to reel it in. Many times, a steelhead

may follow the spoon into the shallow water near you but they may not strike. Let the spoon remain in the water for a while and then reel it in.

The spoon fishing technique is simple and worth a try.

12. Float Fishing Techniques and Tips

Float Fishing is a popular technique used to catch Steelhead. All anglers have their own methods that they use when fishing. Float fishing involves the use of a float and presentation of bait such as salmon eggs, maggots and emerald shiners. The key lies in the slow presentation of the bait. The fish need to see the bait as it gradually drifts downstream.

The technique involves casting upstream and then allowing the float to drift downstream. The drift should be drag free. During this time, the line should be out of the water. If there is any unusual movement of the float, you need to set the hook. You will notice that, once a fish bites the bait, the float will go under the water suddenly. If it is winter, then the float will bob and go under the water slowly. The time to set the hook is when the float goes under.

The bait has to be very attractive for the fish. The steelhead loves salmon eggs or spawn sacs. Even if the water is murky, the steelhead has a strong olfactory sense and does not need to see its bait. Maggots are another popular bait and yield high results. The scent of the maggots attracts the fish. Emerald Shiners are the steelhead's favorite food after Spawn sacs. The Berkeley power bait is also effective bait and popular among anglers.

Here are a few tips you can use when float fishing. Do not use a monofilament line, but a fluorocarbon tippet. This line sinks faster and is longer lasting. Once the fish is on the hook, it will do many leaps, so let the drag be loose and, once the fish settles down, then slowly tighten the drag. Use different types of bait on different days, keep them handy and see which one works best on that particular day. If the fishing is not good at one pool move to the next, and then

elsewhere. Go from the top to the bottom. The float you need to use will depend on water level and visibility. For shallow and clear water, the float can be small and the float needs to be bigger for faster water.

13. Steelhead Fishing Technique - The Pink Worm

Pink worm has been a common bait in British Columbia for catching steelhead for a long time. Lately, this is gaining popularity as bait for steelhead in other regions. These worms are light and float on water. You need to add weight to them so they come within easy visibility of steelhead. Normally, steelheads prefer deep waters. You could do well by floating worms just a foot away from river bottom. In Canada, pink worm bait is normally beneath a float with many splits in the line to attract steelheads.

You can put small three or four inch pink worms on a spring hook under a fixed float. Then, alter position of the worms so they are about a foot from the water bottom. Larger steelheads normally go for this bait.

Alternatively, you can use pink worm for drift fishing too. You could thread leader through the worm and then add a bead near the hook to prevent steelhead from pulling the worm from a hook. After tying this to your swivel, fish normally and let the worm go downstream for about ten seconds before reeling. The bobbing movement of the worm attracts steelhead and it follows the worm unflinchingly until it is just below you. Another technique is to set pink worm at the back of a diver on five-foot leader and then back-roll bait to attract and catch steelhead.

14. Casting Spoons and Spinners in Lakes and Streams

Weighted spinners and spoons are important fishing tools and allow you closer interaction with fish in river, stream, and lake waters because you can observe them better in the lucid waters of lakes or streams. However, you use different casting methods in different waters. Most importantly, you need to feel and understand how to work these baits under different water conditions.

You learn many things through your mistakes. Initially, make short casts and then get it back slowly, watching the tip of your rod all the way. Tip vibration indicates the functioning of your lure beneath the water. With rod vibrations, you actually sense the working of your lure. Spoon should move sideways and swim while a spinner needs a steady revolving motion of blade. Spinning spoon motion indicates fast reeling and unsteady revolution of the blade indicates slow reeling.

Spoons could be of different shapes like oval - Hot Shot® Wobbler, tear-drop- Metric Pro Spinner®, oblong- Needlefish®, Crocodile®, U-shaped- Super Duper®, long and flat- Hus-Lure®, or slab-sided. Different parts of the spoon are hook, split ring, blade, and instrument to attach to your fishing line like split ring, swivel ring, snap, or swivel. All these attachment gadgets should have a round end to allow sideways swaying movement of spoon. It should not be V-shaped or have a pointed edge.

Place weight on a shaft and fix hook to it directly or through a split ring. Then allow the blade to have a free spiral movement with help of few ball bearings between clevis and blade. Then, attach barrel or snap swivel to the spinner eye.

Alternatively, tie fishing line directly to the eye. Spinners attract fish under water through different acoustic vibrations depending on blade shapes and means of attachment to the shaft.

How to use Spoons and Spinners for Maximum Benefit

The location of fish in lakes and rivers differ according to time of day, amount of sunlight and location of food. River fish normally prefer bottoms unless they find any lucrative food near the surface.

During initial fishing rounds, you need to find the proper fishing level from repeated trials. Fish panic when they see your line. Clear, small diameter line are best, as they are invisible in still and clear lake waters. Heavier lines pose problems for casting and are easily visible to fish.

On dark days or dark times of day, use brass or copper finish lines while nickel is best on bright days or in clear water. Color finishes should be in perfect synchronization with natural food available in lake and river waters.

Besides these, keep giving small, frequent jolts to your line, change speed every few seconds, stop motion completely and then re-surge with a jerk, reel fast and then suddenly slow down to bring about natural movement of fish feeding underwater. You can use spinners in rivers and watch the blade motions to get good catch. You need to slow down or increase reel speed accordingly.

15. West Coast Steelheading Techniques

You may find several things in common among anglers; the ecstasy attached to the sport, the scenic ambience and the wild rushing water - every aspect has its own charm. Above all, there is excitement and the accompanying knee-weakening feeling that is an intrinsic part of the fishing sport. Sometimes, the steelhead take away your gear after a hook-set.

The common tendency among anglers is to calculate the success of the expedition by the number of times the steelhead falls into your trap. A few steps taken beforehand may improve your chances.

If you are prepared for the different types of water conditions, you have a better chance to succeed. During high water conditions, use larger gear, brighter colors and shorter leaders. Under low water conditions; that is a characteristic cold, dry season, use small gear, subtle colors and lighter and longer leaders.

Another important aspect is to consider the run timing. Early in the season, try to fish at places where the least number of people are present. Fish that are not accustomed to gear often come in to its trap.

If you plan to fish during midseason, be aware that, by this time, they become more selective. So, use gear of appropriate size that lend a natural presentation.

During the late season, they become even more selective and you have to display your finest fishing skills to dupe them. They have grown wiser going through various hooking traps and you need to have planned meticulously to be successful.

To have a good catch, take account of the tide change as well. Tides determine their movement and feeding habits. Thus, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the relation between the two. Early morning fishing and around tide changes, will usually yield good results.

16. Deadly Technique of Pulling Plugs

Pulling plugs, also known as “hot shotting”, is a deadly technique for fishing steelhead. It is very popular among the guides in the northwest and is even good for novices. In pulling plugs, diving plugs like "Wiggle Warts®", "Hot Shots®" etc., are used.

The plugs are let out downstream while the boat is kept in its position with motor or oars. After you let out the plugs about 35' - 40', the plugs start to dive because of the force of the river current. The boat is moved slowly downstream and, consequently, the plug wiggles into the hole alluringly right into a holding steelhead's face.

Plugs are effective in catching steelhead when the fish is anchored in a drift and the plugs work below them. Their effectiveness grows further when they are moved slowly downstream. When you make a plug work slowly downstream, a steelhead has to force itself towards making a decision; either it has to move away or strike it. The danger is great when it decides to strike the plug as it may result in a hook set.

An experienced plug puller has a different strategy. He puts out the plug upstream of the place where he desires to fish. You can choose plugs according to your liking. Some also prefer metallic colors with variations of blue, pink, green, etc. One of the guiding principles relating to this is that you should prefer dark finishes when the days are dark and bright colors when the days are brighter.

Pulling plugs is a fruitful technique for catching steelhead. It can relieve your nerves when things are hard for you. It succeeds when all other methods fail to give you a nice catch.

17. Tackle Technique

- Float and Spinners for Steelhead

Use of spinners brings with it the characteristic image of a person standing on the borders of a lake occupied with retrieving and casting spinners. Another common alternative is the use of float fishing rigs. It consists of a pencil lead, a float and the lure that you choose for your purpose. The last few years have seen overcrowding of the river edges and varied new luring techniques. If you wish to be successful in your fishing expedition, you should try new lure techniques to attract fish.

The three fishing techniques that yield good catches are Dead Floating (effective in slow deeper pools), Down & Across (beneficial for riffles) and Free-Floating (beneficial in transition water or in water where slow fishing is required). In Free-Floating, you have to place your spinner in the same manner as you would have done if using fishing yarn or bait. You have to allow the lure to go to the bottom. Your float should drift at the same speed as the water current. Down & Across is useful where the water is shallow, even less than three feet deep. You cannot apply free-floating here because it will snag the bottom. In Dead Floating, the bottom is continuously snagged. It makes the use of brass colorado (blade) and you will have to set your float around 12 inches deeper than the water you will fish.

Steelhead has an attacking temperament. It will attack every lure, no matter what its speed is.

Light is yet another significant point that you should consider while going for steelhead. For a spinner blade, adequate degree of light penetration is must.

You should keep in mind this factor when choosing a lure. The speed of the blade and the speed of water are directly proportional. Thus, your blade will turn faster if the speed of the water is great and vice versa. Thus, if you are fishing in slow water, use a smaller blade to make up for the speed. You can choose from any of the three most widely used finishes of brass, copper and chrome. For steelhead though, a large-sized brass blade is usually a good choice.

There are various ways to tackle and fish steelhead yet many have not been tried often. With slight, simple variations, you can make your fishing experience a unique and memorable one.

18. Using Oils, Aminos, Plants and Pheromones to Attract Steelhead

Different types and categories of attractants for steelhead are available in the market. Each passing year adds a few more to the list. Whether you squirt it or stick it, the basic purpose behind every such effort is to make it even more attractive and alluring for the steelhead.

Many anglers find it a boon that makes the catching process quite easy. With growing popularity of these attractants many anglers do not even think of wetting the line unless they have added their preferred fish attractant to it. Consequently, the anglers who have expertise in fishing cannot now always claim it is their extraordinary skill which attracts the steelhead they catch.

Four main categories are the most important fish attractants. They are oil, plants, amino acids and pheromones. Many products having these basic ingredients are available in the market today, but some zealous anglers mix an extra ingredient or two in a product to claim it their own. This helps them to establish themselves as proven fish catchers.

Oil-based fish attractants are developed by putting sand shrimp, sardines, herring and crawdad into paste form. The desired compounds are then extracted from the paste to make a fish formula that immediately attracts them. While oil based products are the least effective in attracting steelhead, they have one notable advantage. Oil based attractants are able to procure the attention of the fish for a longer span and the fish keep them in their mouth longer. These attractants are also helpful in masking human scent or any other

offending odor. Some oil-based products like Fish Formula, Smelly Jelly, Riverside Lures Real Craw and Mike's Shrimp Oil have been of help.

Attractants having amino acids as the basic constituent have been manufactured, keeping in mind that the amino acid combination helps to stimulate feeding in different kinds of fish. Products like Pharmacal's Baitmate Live, Berkley's attractants and Dr. Juice's Elixirs have amino acid base.

Some plant by-products also act as effective fish attractants. Scents from banana oil, garlic, anise, etc. resemble amino acids in their fish-attracting characteristic. Steelhead are not accustomed to these aromas and immediately becomes interested in it. Similarly, pheromones play an effective role in attracting fish. Animals of the same species to communicate with each other use pheromones. Fish usually use this chemical to recognize a member of their species for courtship and mating. Thus, it serves as an effective attractant to help the anglers in catching fish. The only fish attractant that uses pheromones is Dr. Juice Elixir.

You should use a fish attractant with particular caution. Fish-attractants having natural byproducts can become toxic after a certain time - that not only becomes hazardous for the fish but may also be dangerous for the person handling it. You should follow the instructions carefully and keep it away from extremely hot conditions.

19. How to Catch More Steelheads on Artificial Lures

It has been common practice to catch big fish like steelheads with live lures. Normally anglers drop down mullets or menhaden in vicinity of huge fish to attract and then catch them. This technique is so common and popular that most anglers do not want to step into unknown quarters of attracting steelheads with artificial baits. However, you can have a good catch through such artificial baits by using simple tricks.

Steelheads come up near center-console boats with temperature highs of seventy degrees in the hot summer months of May and June. You need silver or gold, diamond-shaped spoons of numbers one, two, or three to catch them. Keep spoons behind trolling sinkers on swivel bases to stop twisting of lines while fishing. Stiff rods are best. Huge spoons go deeper into the water. Anglers can use these to reach fish at the exact depth of water by using depth finders. Artificial lures keep bobbing up and down or sideways when you proceed on a long line.

Steelheads need huge lures. Hence, you can use thick spoons with enough lure to attract them. You need to be sure about the strength of your line. Plastic leaders need to be strong and should not bend. Cedar plugs are equally effective and resemble freshwater bait to the core. When you reel it at high-speed, it is similar to movements of a hurt baitfish and can makes steelheads attack it more vigorously. A medium-weight rod creates better tugging.

You could also use lighter baits for catching steelheads. Such lures include baitfish imitations, jigs, and poppers. Trolling helps you to reach the steelheads

location faster. Once you reach there, it is best to switch off the motor and allow your boat to drift while you cast. Otherwise, exhaust fumes and noise push away steelheads.

Larger jigs of bucktail bounce more and attract steelheads. Smaller jigs work well only until a depth of thirty feet. Beyond that, you could use casting spoons with a little menhaden's oil added to the tail of the jig.

While using surface lures, it is better to go in the early morning to places where steelheads come in clusters at dawn. Top water poppers work best in such conditions. Huge casting and trolling lures for striped bass are good for steelheads. Some lures create swimming postures through plastic lips and body shapes.

You can control the depth of your lure through length of line, diameter of line and controlling the speed of your boat. Your sinker and planer can judge or change the running depth of your line. You can use lipped crank bait lures to attract surface steelheads by trolling them along the boat. These are in different sizes, weights, colors, and shapes. These artificial lures are the perfect design to go to deep waters, then jiggle right across steelheads and create terrific vibrations. Steelheads immediately attack while jigs rise to the top.

Bass plugs could be damaged due to steelhead attacks. Hooks straighten, bass rods break, and reels empty in such attacks. Better gear helps in developing good fishing techniques. You need to use monofilament wires with cheap lures, spinning reels with 15-20 pounds and lengths of 300 yards. Titanium wire offers the best stretch. Metallic, hard plastic, nylon, or wood coated with durable finishes and strong stainless steel hooks complement the working of artificial lures.

20. Steelhead Fishing in Little Waters

Steelhead fishing in pools and streams is great fun. The season for steelhead fishing usually begins in December. The Hatchery steelhead shows up between Thanksgiving and Christmas. They run earlier than their native cousins, which generally arrive between Valentine's Day and Easter. However, it may be possible to see advance scouts after New Year's Day.

If you encounter a pool holding a lot of steelhead, it is advisable to fish hard in the marginal-looking pocket water below the pool. You will find more steelhead staggered in the pocket water downstream. Generally, pocket-water steelhead takes the first good presentation. Floats and jigs are best when the water is low to "steelhead green". A No. 5 spinner works well when the water is higher.

The reactions of pooled steelhead are different from pocket-water steelhead. Once the first aggressive steelhead tears up the hole, the others usually take some coaxing. Free-drifting bait under a float is a very effective way of steelhead fishing in big slow pools.

In low, slow waters, free-drifting bait is the best technique. Baited hooks with an 8 to 12-inch leader and a fixed float can be very effective tools here. The ideal hook size is No. 1 or No. 2. You may need to do some casting to the slow side of the current seam. Allow the float to move downstream along a slack line. Generally, the strikes are light and the float just dips under. Set the hook if you feel a head shake.

Traditional big water steelhead fishing methods, such as tossing spinners or drift-fishing bait are more effective in higher water flows. You can also try the

fly rod in big streams. It is not a good technique in small streams, as you do not get enough room to swing a fly. Indicator-nymph fishing is a better way in such waters.

When you have an “over-lined” rod, you have roll casting. An 11-weight saltwater taper floating fly line would be fine on an 8-weight rod. Use heavy fly lines in saltwater. Saltwater lines are available in coldwater (striped bass) and warm-water (tarpon and bonefish) versions. Cold-water version is better for steelhead.

Fly-fishing is another technique, which is slower-paced than spin fishing. You cannot be very quick in covering the water if you use this technique. Therefore, you should pick a prime stretch of water and cover the water methodically after getting into a casting rhythm.

21. The Key to Successful Steelhead Angling

For successful steelhead angling, it is necessary to get the lures and baits down to the fish you want to catch. It becomes difficult to fish steelhead, particularly in high and off-color water of the coastal rivers. In such a situation, anglers need to study the water thoroughly and find out the comfort zone of the fish.

The best steelhead angling technique in high and off-color water is back trolling. You need a drift boat or a small "kicker" outboard on a jet sled here. Row it slowly upstream into the current, which will create tension on your fishing line. It will take your lure or bait to the steelhead waiting at the deepest holes. Besides this traditional version, back trolling has several other versions. Back bouncing is quite popular, where anglers bounce a bobber and/or bait across the bottom as the boat slowly moves downstream. Side planning is another technique, which involves working plugs or bait through deep pockets and pools. This technique is popular with the shore-bound anglers.

Anglers use a non-weighted plug for back trolling, which allows the lure to follow the river currents naturally maintaining a position near the bottom. Non-weighted plugs come in a wide variety of makes and models. You can explore your local bait and tackle shops to find out the product that is best for your purpose.

Back bouncers on the other hand need tools such as bobbers and bait (roe, sand shrimp, etc.). They also are available in different varieties. Those include spotted patterns, half-and-half color patterns and rainbow blends. Most anglers

use a strand or two of soft yarn in the leader's bumper or egg loop to fish Corkys.

No matter which technique you apply, you need to consider many things for successful steelhead angling. Those are –

Plug tuning – Follow the instructions on the carton of your plug to tune it for better performance. It will allow the plug to run straight and dive deeper and have a consistent irritating wobble.

Knowing the water – You would not find steelheads in all parts of a river. You can get the help of a guide to identify the spots where the steelheads are. You also need to understand which plug is more effective at a particular spot.

Sharpening the hooks – No matter what hook you use, it is necessary to keep it sharp. Otherwise, you may lose your catch.

Positioning the rod – You can use your rod holders to get your plug down to the bottom. You will need to keep the rod at the right angle for that.

Pre rigged rods – Keep two or three pre rigged rods with you. It will save you a lot of time on changing gear. Have a good combination of plug-pulling line and a limber. Avoid slow-action plug rod for tossing bait.

Checking the plug's distance – Check distance of your plug in front of the boat. 50 feet is usually a sufficient measure. However, there are several other factors which influence its effectiveness.

Choosing the right color – Use neutral shades like the darker shades of blue, green and pink in clear waters. The ideal colors in dirty water are red, bright orange and all-white.

Handling the boat – Skillful handling of the boat is necessary for successful steelhead angling. You may need to row side to side at some spots, while straight sweeping may be better at some other spots.

Using scents – Using manufactured scents may produce positive results in angling. You can choose from a wide variety of scents available in the market.

Taking cues from partners – If you find your fishing partner making big catches, have a look at his techniques. You may learn a thing or two by observing your successful partners. Do not hesitate to ask for their help.

22. Steelhead Fishing in High and Turbid Water

Fishing steelheads becomes very troublesome when the waters are high and turbid. However, you can beat all odds and increase your chances of success if you apply the right techniques.

You need some special techniques to succeed in fishing steelheads after the winter storms hit the coastal streams. Besides the high and turbid waters, you may also face limited visibility in such conditions.

Skillful tracing of the steelhead travel routes and use of the visual and olfactory senses can give anglers success even in hostile conditions.

It is better to avoid trying to fish steelheads in the wake of a storm. Swelling waters and increased turbidity make it dangerous. The steelheads move quickly through a system and they do not even bite in such situations. You should wait for opportunities when the river starts to drop a while after the storm, but you do not need to keep waiting for the river to come to a degree of clarity.

Steelheads usually adopt different routes when the streams swell in winters. You need to develop an understanding of their routes in high waters to make big catches. They often shift their routes from the middle of the stream to the banks. Their exact route depends on several factors such as the rate of current flow, type of river bottom, brush lines, etc. However, you can work close to shore with some confidence.

Use larger plugs with built-in rattles to attract steelhead. Work the plugs tight to the shore as they move near the shore in the high waters. You can guide the

plugs through rocks, submerged root wads and off logs. You can even fish one side of the river first and then row back upstream to fish the other side.

You may find your fishing partner's making merry, while you are not being able to catch a single fish despite all your efforts. His techniques may be similar to yours, but try to find out if he is edging you on scent. In such situations, you should experiment with your scents and egg cures. Following your partner on it may help you.

You can cure your eggs with various scents you may have or put the scents into the river. Some simple changes can give you wonderful results.

Different varieties of scents are available in the market to hit the olfactory senses of the steelhead. They increase the chances of anglers catching steelhead in high and turbid waters. The use of scents is more effective in attracting the steelhead in summer, but it works on winter fish as well.

The three major scent producers are Atlas-Mike's, Pro-Cure and Smelly Jelly who produce several types of scents. You put them in your baits while fishing steelhead in high and turbid waters. Often, the scent drives a fish to bite.

You may find it difficult to choose the right scent from the available options. The best way to deal with that is to keep several scents with you when you are out fishing. Remember that using a particular scent regularly may render it ineffective. Therefore, it is advisable to experiment with different scents. You can even try combinations of different scents.

The high and turbid waters should not keep you from going fishing. Though fishing steelhead becomes a little difficult when winter rains and storms blow

the rivers out of condition, the right approach can give results. Just wait for the river to calm down a little and get into the act with the right techniques.

23. Summer Steelhead Fishing with Jig and Bobber

Jig fishing for steelheads is an effective technique - you can have a good haul using this. You need proper jigs and bobber for the technique to work well. The spinning reel is the main component of this fishing technique. Without this, you cannot move lines properly.

You tie jig to leader and the other side to ball bearing barrel swivel. This connects to mainline, which has bobber and small bead. On top the mainline on bobber is the bobber stopper over bead. The bobber stopper is essentially a thread that clings to the fishing line. This never moves until you do it deliberately nor does it allow the bobber to move off. The thread needs to be heavy or specifically rod-wrapping string to prevent any movements. Some anglers prefer ready-made bobber stoppers. This has beads for perfect functioning. Of course, some anglers prefer doing it themselves to be sure of no slippages.

The main factor behind proper fixation of your bobber stopper is to fix your water levels for fishing. You can choose any depth of water for fishing. If you want to fish in shallow waters, adjust leader length and accordingly slope bobber top. If you want to fish in deep waters, slide your stopper accordingly. Winding spool and sliding is a lot simpler with Bobber stopper.

Both jigs and bobbers need perfect coordination and balancing for a good haul. 1/8 to 1/4 ounce jigs are best for fishing in summer and needs to be within sight of steelhead. 1/8 ounce jig matches well with 1/8 ounce bobber. Similarly, 1/4-ounce jig works well with 1/4-ounce bobber. Bobbers could be foam or wooden center slide types. Both are highly sensitive with good visibility. Streamlined

bobbers offer almost no resistance to fish and they easily come in to the jig, which can glide downstream in natural motion. However, larger bobbers pull along and often need mending.

While casting upstream, you need to monitor the movement of the bobber closely. A vertically floating bobber is a good indication. If your bobber tips downstream, you need to adjust it to avoid your jig hitting the bottom. If your bobber tips the other way, you need to mend your line.

You should change leaders with different water conditions. 10-pound leader is best in early parts of the year with high waters and many fish about. In summer, fishing with jigs poses challenges. You can go with leaders ranging from 8 to even 4 pounds. Jig colors are very variable and differ for rivers, personal choices, water conditions, and daily weather. Use lead heads in varied color combinations to get maximum hookups. Besides, just before fishing with jigs, take off hook to cut off any connection with jig head.

24. Some Useful Tips to Catch Steelhead Successfully

Fishing for steelheads and catching them successfully is a challenge in itself. Most anglers are aware of this Herculean task and these tips can assist good and easy steelhead catch.

Steelheads refuse food while on their way upstream to lay eggs, most often in the very places where they hatched out. Then they just bite at baits more to defend themselves than for hunger. They might hold bait loosely in their mouths and then breathe them out as swiftly, and the angler might not even feel that steelhead biting into his bait.

- Steelheads are incapable of pushing out artificial baits fast. However, they like the taste of fresh roe and normally hold on to such bait for sufficient time for you to understand that you have hooked steelhead. Hence, roe pulls them out of their hiding places.
- Normally, a good roe adds favorable scent into water, which pulls steelheads into its trail and you may view your possible catch within easy distance. Alternatively, you can use bobbers and yarn with groups of fresh roe. This is effective bait in dark and muddy waters - when water is dark early morning or late evening and muddy after a heavy downpour. Brightly colored bobbers offer visibility with favorably scented roe to attract steelheads.

Different fishing methods work fine with roe and you could use them to haul steelheads. Drift fishing is one such method where you use bait to flow with the current across the bottom of the water. You could use a sinker that just

bobs along the rocks without cutting off. You can cover a lot of water in little time by this method.

Normally, you only get one chance to hook a steelhead as it takes in your sweet smelling and juicy roe. Sometimes, of course, steelheads hold roe for few more seconds or keep holding and dropping it playfully few times. This provides ample time to drive your hook in to make a catch.

Plunking is a slightly modified fishing technique where you place your roe bait into a heavy sinker. You now wait for your catch to come to your roe because of its scent, rather than going after steelheads. Sweet scent mingles with water to pull steelheads. While they come in, they stop to chew and bite on to your roe, giving sufficient time to hook your catch.

Boondoggling is similar to drift fishing - the technique differs marginally. Here, you need to cast your line upstream and pull it along as your boat goes downstream. It is better to use bunches of roe as bait to attract and engage steelheads for some time until you can hook them easily.

Back-trolling works inversely to boondoggling. You pull your boat against the river current, using either a diving plug or diver-and-bait ring. Such rowing against the current slows the speed of the boat and you trudge with your bait trailing behind.

Your roe cluster needs to be firmly intact in the hook to catch steelhead. Egg-loop leader helps do this by inserting many groups of roe into the loop and then pulling the mouth of the loop tightly to hold it in place, near the hook shank. If you put in bigger clusters, you need to thread a few times and then fold it into shank and place it firmly. Such egg loops could be stationary or sliding across and up and down the hook's shank.

Roe clusters need proper care and treatment to retain their charm for steelheads. You could dust them in Borax and keep in refrigerator for a few months until you use them. Alternatively, you could dust them with a mixture of one part salt, two parts sugar, and three parts Borax. Refrigerate in a sealed container, shaking container twice for four days. Then store them after adding some food dye and such roe remain fresh for years because of the preservative action of salt.

A few commercial products also serve as good bait for steelheads.

25. Fishing for Steelhead in Upstate New York

Steelheads count for one of the more interesting types of sport fish in the world. These huge fish offer stiff resistance during warmer months. This lessens during cooler and cold months. Anglers are willing to go on far-off fishing expeditions to encounter steelheads and enjoy hauling them in.

Steelhead Fishing Regions

Lower **Niagara** regions with its many gorges and rivers are a storehouse of steelheads. Interesting regions through the course of river Niagara all through the winter months are near **south of Spire, between Art Park and Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, near Lewiston Sand Docks, and Youngstown docks**. From Fort Niagara proceeding east along Route 18, you come across many steelhead clusters towards Rochester.

Important rivers for steelhead fishing east of Fort Niagara are **Six Mile and Four Mile Creeks. Twelve Mile Creek** is equally productive, near Wilson town. Further, down **Eighteen Mile Creek** near Olcott offers opportunities for steelhead fishing until Burt Dam, only when water does not freeze.

Across the western side of the river in mid Olcott, you can fish beneath **Burt Dam**. Both steelhead and brown trout are in plenty supply the whole winter through. Parking facilities at Fisherman's Park in Burt is an additional advantage to anglers. **Golden Hill Creek, Johnson's Creek, and March Creek** are common haunts for steelheads.

Eastwards, **Keg Creek** is active in high times. **Oak Orchard Creek** offers steelhead fishing in lower regions. Best period is spring or after heavy rain. **Sandy Creek** is a good spot in North Hamlin if the river is free.

Further east Salmon Creek off **Braddocks Bay** offers steelhead catches year-long. You can bait with salmon eggs, spawn bags, worms and wigglers for good catches in late winter or early spring months. **Genesee River** in Rochester offers steelhead hauls at **Charlotte piers and Driving Park Avenue**.

Further east of Genesee lies some jetties near **Irondequoit Bay** for steelhead fishing all year through. You can go upstream as far as Fishers town. **Allen's Creek** is another good place.

Away from Salmon Creek in Pultneyville, steelheads abound in **Webster** and near **Maxwell Creek**. These small creeks offer opportunities only during light weather or during high tides.

You can fish for steelheads, lake trout and brown trout near jetties at **Sodus Point**. On the eastern side many creeks abound, which are good steelhead fishing regions in high waters. This region abounds in private property and hence does not offer easy opportunities for anglers. You could travel down further eastwards to little **Salmon and Oswego Rivers**, which have many approachable streams and open lakes for fishing these large fish.

If you encounter clear snowless roads at Little Salmon River, you can easily fish from northern shore at the inlet to beneath Route 104B Bridge and upstream until first barrier. Still north, Route 104B joins with Route 3 along the way to Salmon River. Just before the river, **Grindstone Creek and Selkirk Shores State Park** are exciting places to fish for steelheads. The pool

at creek mouth has a huge population of steelheads and brown trout. You can fish before dawn with spawn bags or skein chunks dropped right to the bottom or as floats.

Proceeding still north, after crossing Salmon River, you come to **Lindsey Creek, Little Sandy Creek, Skinner Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek**. All these abound in steelheads although it is difficult fishing in mild winters. Of course, you can set out on your fishing expeditions as soon as the ice starts melting.

26. How and Where to Catch West Coast Steelhead

Steelheads adequately represent their eastern cousins, the Atlantic salmon, on the West Coast. They may be elusive and frustrating earlier but are quite rewarding in matters of spectacular acrobatics and line-peeling runs. The Pacific Ocean is the most fertile ground for them. They are the ideal targets of anglers during the winter months. The fly-fishing techniques have usually evolved from the historic methods adapted to catch Atlantic salmon from the British Isles and North American eastern seaboard. Using nymphs is a modern technique applied for catching trout and is useful for steelheads as well.

Some valuable tips for catching steelheads are:

Taking care in timing: to hunt steelheads you have to be quite particular about the timing unlike catching trout that are available in the river system throughout the year. As the season progresses, they move up or down in the river system. A local source can best provide you up-to-date information.

Weather information: weather plays a major role in determining the suitability of fishing. A fishable river can drastically turn into a brown torrent because of a change in weather.

Understand the temperament of Steelhead: though you may like to have a solitary experience of fishing in pure wilderness, you may have to opt for a steelhead river with numerous anglers to catch them. Being a new angler, you have to start upstream and then move towards the tail of the pool.

You need proper equipment: you should not go for steelhead catching in inclement weather and it is always better to protect yourself against the weather turning bad. Fleece garments, synthetic or woolen headwear, fingerless gloves and wool socks should be worn.

Some of the best West Coast Steelhead Flies are Woolly Bugger, Meg-A-Egg Sucking Leech, Black Bear Green Butt, Striptease, Stonefly Bugger etc. The anglers use them to attract steelheads so they fall in their trap.

The best hunting grounds of West Coast steelheads are as follows:

San Francisco Bay Area: the rivers flowing both north and south of San Francisco like Gualala and San Lorenzo are a good hunting ground for west coast steelheads.

Southwestern Oregon: the coastal streams and larger systems of the region like Umpqua, Rogue, McKenzie and Illinois are rich steelhead areas.

California Central Valley: the region has good population of winter fish like the American and Feather.

Northern California: fair population of salmon and steelhead are found around the upper section of the lower Sacramento. Similarly, Klamath and its tributaries along the North California Coast are abundant in steelheads.

Central Oregon: the most well known stream i.e. the Deschutes River is largely known for steelheads. Besides, Northwestern Oregon and Northeastern Oregon are also rich grounds for steelheads.

Washington: the rivers of the region like Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Skagit, and Sauk Rivers are also good sources of steelheads and provide the anglers a nice catching option.

If you wish to catch steelheads and do not pay much heed to the extra care you need to take, you may land in “troubled water”. A rain wading jacket is necessary for a good catching expedition. Clothes absorbing lots of moisture should not be worn. Enough space for extra socks inside your wading shoes is also a necessity. Both single and double-handed rods may go with you depending on your special requirements.

Winter steelhead catching may sometimes require hours of recurrent casting in freezing conditions and extremely cold water, until the desired catch occurs. You require considerable patience to be successful in this hard chase. After all, the tougher the task, the more adventurous it becomes.

27. How and Where to Catch Great Lakes Winter Steelhead

Great Lake steelheads are often considered inferior to the ones found in the Pacific Northwest. While experts believe that Lake Michigan steelheads are quite dull in response, the only marked difference between the West and Midwest heads is that the latter are more abundant.

While there may not be a notable difference between the steelheads found in different places, the best ways of catching them differs greatly. In the Great Lake region, steelheads are more prone to fall for a wet fly than otherwise, which require them to rise from the normal height for flies. It needs tremendous effort and you have to reach the bottom to make a successful catch. There are three basic ways to approach them. If the west coast tactic is applied partially, you can cast across lead core sinking line and swing deep a wet fly or streamer in the current.

The tactic is quite dangerous but the small and quick nature of rivers limit its hazards. The rivers have tight pockets of deep water, the best congregation ground for fish.

Chucking and ducking is the most popular fly-fishing technique used around the Great Lake region. Chuck-and-duckers use a straight monofilament or running lines with a lob rig made of one or two flies and plenty of lead sinkers to weight it with.

Another preferred technique is fishing for steelhead applying the tactic used for trout. Nymphs and fish eggs are beloved meals of steelhead and trout. Trout

anglers know the art of duping them and imitate the nymphs by pinching one or more slip shots near the fly. They attach a strike indicator on the leader at a high position and make them drift through pools and riffles. The angler exercises precise control through a floating line and the other parts as the cork, strike indicator foam and buoyant yarns function as bobbers to gauge the fish movement.

Steelhead anglers often use a tandem rig with a nymph imitation and a yarn egg.

While it does not involve complex science, you may find it trickier than expected. You have to upgrade your trout gear for steelhead. A graphite rod of 7 or 8 weight and about nine foot long is needed, with a dependable disc-drag reel and a large arbor to support plenty of line and backing. For discolored and high water, you use more weight than normal.

You have to be an experienced fisherman for casting the weight on the leader properly. For fly-casting, the lesser motion you go for - the better it is. Very often, a single back cast is sufficient for the purpose. You should stop the rod tip higher, before the forward cast ends. The fly is able to sink faster in water as the leader and fly hit the water a minute before the line. The upstream mend prevents the current drag and recurrent mending must produce long drag-free drift. You can strip the line in and cast again when the line starts to straighten below.

It is still not known why the Great Lake steelheads ignore and fall into the trap of traditional fly tactics. To minimize the use of lead, indicator fishing serves a good alternative. Steelheads resemble their river-dwelling cousins in many respects, and take up to the common lovely urges, like their smaller relatives.

It is interesting to catch them. They are the only game fishes found in freshwater that savagely strike a fly at 33 degree Fahrenheit. The best chasing ground for steelhead are Salmon River and Cattaraugus Creek in New York, Conneaut in Ohio, St. Joseph in Michigan and places in Wisconsin and Ontario.

28. Tips for Catching Steelhead in Late Winter or Early Spring

Some rivers offer many opportunities for you to fish steelheads, where these are both hatcheries and natural habitats for such fish. The fish come into these river waters from late winter months and stay well into early spring months like April. Such rivers offer you enough fishing outings and catches of steelheads.

You need to adopt slightly different techniques for catches in winter and in spring. Water temperatures in cold months of December, January, and February range lower than 40F. Fish do not find this favorable to swim across and hence, remain under water. Their sluggish nature does not tempt them to go after any bait. Although you may not have many good catches during this season, you could study different steelhead grounds, their regular locations, and pattern of their movements.

The scene changes with the arrival of spring in late March and April. Water temperatures rise above 40F and steelhead are more active. They keep popping up and down, in and out of water. The time is very suitable for mating. Steelheads behave violently with prospective mates and hence, come to surface more often. Similarly, they also surface to the top of the water extensively during the hatching period in spring. Earlier study of steelhead movements and location comes in handy during early spring. Now, you only need to target key positions to get good hauls.

Seasonal tactics of natural resources are a common phenomenon. During the early part of the year, you can come across changes in river courses, filling up

of deep holes, changes in water flow rates, main rivers breaking into smaller channels, logs and huge boulders moving out due to melting of snow and seasonal warmth. These form and change your fishing patterns during the year.

Steelheads have strong habits; in the sense that they come again to the same spots every time they return from the sea. Their directions and routes rarely undergo any changes. Besides, they move in groups and bunch together. Hence, if you catch a steelhead from any particular spot behind a creek or rock, you may find many more at the same spot. The knowledge gained during late winter stands you in good stead during spring and other months. In the warmer season, the waters are full of different varieties of fish. However, you get good pickings of steelheads in little time by scouting marked portions in advance.

Although baits in winter and summer or spring months remain the same, you could change quantity of baits to lure fish. Different fishing techniques have little hold on seasonal changes. Hence, stick to most convenient and highest yielding fishing technique to pick your haul of steelheads.

29. Signs of an Ideal Steelheader

Catching steelheads is a daunting task. It requires nerves of steel to be able to stay long and alert at your fishing spots, waiting for your catch. A few characteristics distinguish the successful personality:-

You enjoy fishing standing at a distance say around fifty feet away. There is no fun or adventure in fishing just five feet away.

You need to be extremely resourceful; able to adapt to all suitable and unsuitable conditions, gear, or environment to concentrate on catching steelheads. Nothing can come in your way of trying for a good haul of steelheads.

You need to be always happy and ready to share information and resources with fellow anglers. At the same time, should also be an eager audience for others' successful fishing endeavors.

You would rather be happy with a quality catch than with a quantity catch. You could feel your day best utilized while learning and observing new techniques rather than having huge hauls every time you cast your line.

You need to take good care of your environment for fishing to thrive further in years to come. Hence, you could work on various conservation projects.

You check all regulations and license requirements well in advance and make sure that you have any current permits that you need.

You enjoy your sport and excitement needs to be alive every time you go fishing. It is more about having fun rather than only catching loads of fish.

You need not be a perfectionist personified in all matters and fishing techniques.

30. Your Behavior as a Steelhead Angler

It is a common belief that about ten percent of the steelhead fish anglers claim around ninety percent of fish caught. Their success lies in their greater understanding of the fish's behavior.

Factors like stream conditions and weather play a considerable role in determining the behavior of steelhead.

It is necessary to know about the eating habits of steelhead to be an efficient steelhead angler. The imprinting factor is quite remarkable in steelhead. Biologists believe that steelheads are adept at detecting the chemical composition of a water body. It helps them to return to the same river for spawning. An angler who knows the imprinting quality of steelhead can better search their favorite locations.

There had been a common belief among anglers that steelhead never feed after entering a tributary. They even thought that they struck a fly only out of behavioral response. Now the earlier view has been altered and biologists feel that steelhead feed during over-wintering in a river. An aware angler knows well that a steelhead is an opportunistic feeder and takes up anything that resembles its food. During March and April, sucker spawns are largely available in the tributaries of Lake Erie. Consequently, sucker spawn is the most widely used egg pattern for steelhead in the region.

You have to be careful regarding the ideal fishing time for steelhead. During winter, the afternoon is the best part of the day only when the sun has warmed the water considerably. Things may be quite different during summer when the best fishing time is early morning or late afternoon. Like the temperature,

barometric pressure also determines whether an angler could have a fruitful day or not. The swim bladder of a fish is largely affected by barometric pressure. A rise in barometric pressure exerts great pressure on the bladder and affects the internal equilibrium of a fish's body further influencing its behavior and appetite.

Steelhead has remarkable eyesight like other top predators. The two major factors affecting steelhead vision are light levels and turbidity. A combination of pink and green is the perfect color for clear or light-green tinted water. Black works best in muddy water or when the sky is, overcast. Using red coloring in stained water is effective because the color has longest wavelength. An angler who keeps these details in mind is surely going to be more successful in catching steelhead.

31. Steelhead Fishing Etiquette

Overlooking stream etiquette by being enamored with the sole idea of catching a big fish is common. Your objective as an angler should be to respect the essence of the fishing sport and influence others to follow the line. Some of the little basic steelhead-fishing etiquettes are as follows:

Do not crowd an angler's space: while the fishing etiquette clearly lays out the rule that you should not come too close to another angler and give him or her adequate space, it is the most violated rule. If you crowd another angler, you infringe on his or her right and deprive the other angler an undisturbed fishing experience.

Never walk into a run: you may irritate a veteran angler by walking into a run. This often happens because of the lack of knowledge of the stream.

Do not intrude another person's spot: Sometimes it happens that an angler has to move away from his or her spot to land the fish consequently. He or she comes back after getting hold of the fish. Do not try to occupy position of the angler as the movement is temporary and he or she returns immediately.

Do not trouble a foul hooked fish: if you accidentally foul hook a steelhead do not try to control it and give it up. Foul hooking makes it tumultuous, it may leap from water and injure, and unrest other fishes as well. This may ruin the efforts of other anglers and if you repeatedly carry the task, it may make you unpopular among the other anglers.

Accommodate with other forms of fishing as well: while there is always a hidden tussle between bait anglers and fly anglers, a feeling of tolerance is needed between the two to have a congenial fishing atmosphere.

Respect the property of others: enjoying does not mean that you spoil other people's property by spilling garbage etc., after a good fishing day. A growing number of landowners are posting the sign of "No Trespassing", around Lake Erie to avoid the problem of accumulating garbage. Inculcate the habit of picking up discarded monofilament, trash, cans, etc. and dump them at the proper place.

Do not question an angler regarding the release of fish: it entirely depends on the will of the angler whether he keeps a fish after catching it or returns it to water. It is bad etiquette to question a fellow angler regarding it.

Give space to others while they are fighting a fish: catching a fish requires considerable space. Sometimes, you may even have to take out your line to provide the other with adequate space. This situation may arise when another angler has to take a downward movement to control the fish while you are already fishing down the river.

Do not make a noise while walking: if you are noisy and restless, you may be disturbing the others and irritating them. Make sure that you do not create much noise while moving and if you have to stay in water, make minimum surface disturbance possible. Thus, make your fishing sport a memorable experience and respect the feelings of others while entertaining yourself.

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