

FISHING THE UPPER CLACKAMAS COUNTRY IN THE VERY LATE 1940'S AND VERY EARLY 1950'S

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My experiences fishing the upper Clackamas River country of eastern Clackamas County, Oregon during the late 1940's and Early 1950's were in the Collowash Country in the very late 1940's and early 1950's and the "Big Bottom" country of the Upper Clackamas River.

Collowash Trips

These were family trips to Bagby Hot Springs which required an overnight camp where the trail crossed the Collowash just above it's confluence with the Hot Springs Fork.

The trail started at the southern end of the camp ground located at the junction of the Collowash and Clackamas Rivers. The trail headed uphill rapidly for a mile or so then flattened out along a bench above the eastern side of the Collowash. Several miles south of the camp ground the trail forked. The west fork of the trail dropped sharply to the Collowash. A log bridge spanned the river next to some very large house sized rocks. There was a primitive campground on the west side of the river where we camped.

At the crossing bridge there was a large, deep pool where large fish were always laying. We never knew what they were but often chumming sacks of corn or salmon eggs could be seen floating off the bottom of the river-obviously someone wanted to catch these fish in the worst way.

We caught numerous cutthroats in the 9 to 11" range and some rainbows up to 14". As I remember we fished with fly rods using single salmon eggs for bait or did a very rude job of flyfishing. We did little fishing in the Hot Springs Fork except near Bagby Hot Springs. I remember catching numerous small trout in the 6 to 8" range in that part of the stream. We were never able to catch those really "big fish" we saw in the deeper pools.

In 1953 Burril Taylor, Bob Ede, my brother Wes and myself planned a trip to Round Lake. We had heard from some older acquaintances, who went to Round Lake on horseback, that there were large fish in that lake. Being fishing crazy kids that was all we needed to generate the enthusiasm to go there. My parents hiked with us to the Toms Meadow Shelter (it was still in good condition at that time) where we camped for the night. They bid us good by the next morning and we began the long trip to Round Lake. (Wes got sick and had to go back with the folks.)

The trail split a distance above Toms Meadows with one fork going southwest and the other turning east and uphill. (I remember names on the westerly trail like "Bull of The Woods",

and Elk Lake. The Uphill trail went to "Cach Box Meadows" and Hawk Mountain and although I don't remember it saying so, Round Lake. This trail climbed steeply along the north side of a creek with a very deep canyon with several overlooks. It leveled out on the west side of Rhododendron Ridge in the vicinity of Bob Meadow and remained level through Graham Pass and Fawn Meadow until a fork of the trail headed steeply down hill to Round Lake.

The camp ground on the lake was rustic and located on the northeast side. There was a small stream running by the camp and into the lake and a somewhat larger creek running out the west side. There were several old log rafts and indications of fishing activity. Our adult friends had carved their initials in a tree at the camp.

We caught Eastern Brook, Rainbow and German Brown Trout in the lake. Some of the Eastern Brook were 14" or better. We saw very large and numerous trout near the grass beds and channels at the west end of the lake. (We encountered the large whatever it was at Round Lake. We referred to it as our "Sasquatch" sighting but it could have just as easily been a large old bear or elk. Anyway it scared the hell out of us.) We were un-successful in ever catching any of those very large trout so I cannot tell you for sure what species they were. Some had square tails and white edged fins which would suggest Eastern Brook.

We took a cross country route out going down Round Creek to the East Fork Collowash and down stream from there until we hit the trail at the junction with Elk Lake Creek at "Oh Boy" Forest Camp. The trip down the East Fork's narrow canyon was difficult with our big pack boards and I remember having to float around several difficult deep spots. Although it was difficult going we fished and caught innumerable smaller cutthroats and some rainbows. There were large fish in the pools but we were unable to catch them. We caught some very nice cutthroats (12 to 13 inch range - lots of smaller ones too) in the river just below Elk Lake Creek. I remember this watershed being a cutthroat fishery until you got lower down.

We hiked out the next day on the Collowash River Trail, past Toms Meadows and eventually met the folks who had come a mile up the trail to meet us. Unknown to us, while we were in this area, the worst fire conditions in years had sprung up and the Forest Service wanted us out of the area. When we checked out with them (USFS) that evening, assuring them that we had extinguished all our fires completely, you could see the relief in their faces that "those damn kids are out of there now". I guess I really cannot fault them for their concern for us and the forest.