

OUTDOORS

'Social Security Hole'

Regulars catch more lies and tall tales than fish



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

INDEPENDENCE – The longtime regulars at the Emil Marx-Lloyd Strange Fishing Hole catch more lies and tall tales than salmon or steelhead these days. • But that doesn't keep them from coming back to the popular Polk County park on the Willamette River that has been dubbed the "Social Security Hole" because of the demographic of most of the anglers who fish there. • Gene O'Day of Independence, long-retired after 30 years as a construction drywall installer, has more than six decades of fishing at the site under his belt and is the senior member of the loose angling fraternity.

"I have caught more fish here than any man breathing, and that's a fact," he said, adding about the days of 40-fish annual limits, "I can remember back in the '60s there was a 40-punch tag on salmon and steelhead, and they'd get 40 fish right here."

His fishing buddy, Leon Kitchin of Dallas, a retired corrections officer at the state penitentiary in Salem, has fished at the Social Security Hole for more than 40 years.

The pair was closing out the last week of April on an overcast, misty, cool day sitting in the cab of Kitchin's Toyota Tundra pickup parked facing the row of stout salmon rods in holders, each sporting

a large bell to indicate a strike.

There's a lot to like about the view with the wide Willamette gliding by and a large rookery of herons setting up shop and making their presence known in the trees on the opposite bank.

"Most of us who come out here that are retired come out to do what we're doing right now," O'Day said. "Just to kill some time and do a little BS'ing, and if we catch a fish it's just a bonus."

On this day, it was strictly social for Kitchin. "Just the BS," he grinned. "I've got a pole back there, but I haven't put it in the water."

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GETTY IMAGES



Top: River views and picnic tables compliment the fishing for salmon, steelhead and bass. Below: Gene O'Day, left, and Leon Kitchin check out the view while fishing at the the Emil Marx-Lloyd Strange Fishing Hole near Independence.

PHOTOS BY HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

