

# aders

## "Once you get your first steelhead, you're hooked..."--Joe Endicott

Whether rain, sleet, snow, or gloom of day keep the river bank if the run

Mike Miller, a 15-year-old of steelheading experience. "No matter the weather if the fish are in, you go...if you're serious. I've fished in all sorts of weather, most always wet and miserable. Half dry is a precious thing. Sometimes I've been soaked and no fish, but the way it is, you're on

Why then do these people do themselves often question, "Why am I a fisher?" They seem to

have little trouble finding the answer.

"Once you get your first steelhead you're hooked," confides Endicott. "It gives you a thrill, a taste that makes you want to come back. It's a real challenge, you work hard for your payoff."

Steve Fagan elaborates, "One steelhead is worth the license, although it doesn't always seem like it. Sometimes, like cold miserable days like today, you really question why you're out here, cold and wet, and your wives are probably made at you for being here. Then someone near you gets a fish and you

know why; the heart starts pumping."

"I had some friends tell me about it so I decided to try it," he said. "I scraped some gear together and here I am. It was really exciting catching the fish and I guess really lucky too. Maybe I'll appreciate it more later on when I don't get so lucky, when I have to wait. But I'm willing, I got a taste, I'll be back."

On this day, a new friend joined the club. Ron Brown drove out from Forest Grove to try his hand at steelheading. His first time out he caught an eight pound buck (male) steelhead, now he understands.

If that isn't enough, there is the competition among fisherman for the good fishing space along the river and in boats. When the run is on, it is not uncommon to see 70 or 80 people lined up along a stretch of riverbank about 15 feet apart, sometimes less.

This line-up begins about 5 a.m.

Gene Usitalo, often a member of the early morning gathering related, "There's only so much room to fish and even fewer hot spots along the bank, but getting a good spot often means the difference between getting fish and not getting fish."

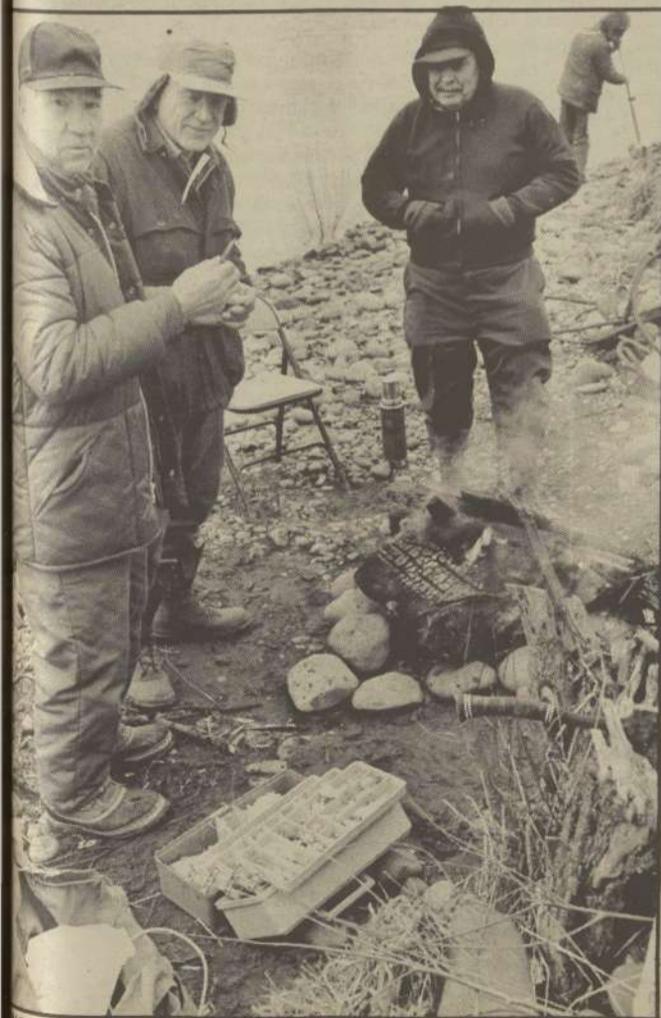
Even with a good spot, the name of the game is often patience, and choosing the right gear.

According to Steve Fagan, "It takes about 24 hours of fishing per fish caught, sometimes more, and using the right gear is vital. We all try to help each other out, find out what bait is working on what riggings and help each other rig up."

Still the element of competition remains. When someone catches a fish, everyone around that person is happy for him, but everyone curses under their breath because it was him instead of them.

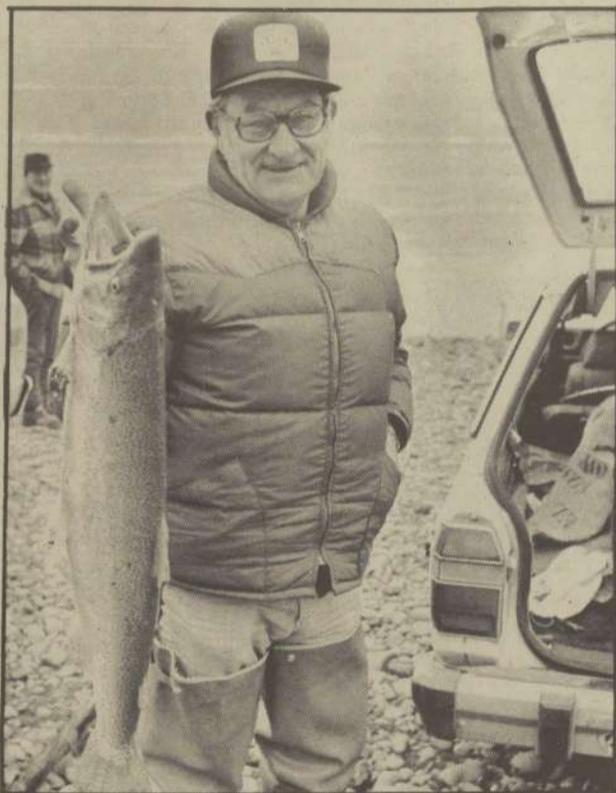


WET FEET. Mike Coffman, Doug Rine and boaters take to the water after steelhead



WARM GAME. John Romack, Ron Brown, Steve Fagan and Joe Endicott huddle up by fire on cold Willamette riverbank.

Wednesday, March 3, 1982



THE PRIZE. Gene Usitalo shows off 14 pound steelhead. A friend commented, "He does that all the time."

Story and photos by Duffy Coffman

