

# Rivers Bend Outfitters

## Fishing & Hunting in the Columbia River Gorge

### Monster at Celilo

*I had explained to the Doctor and his teenage son that the fish we were seeking would stand second to none when it came to heavy weight fighting strength and determination to stay in the 100 foot depths laying below my boat.*

*Registered Guide, Glenn Dee Summers is Oregon, Coast Guard licensed and insured. A registered fishing and hunting guide is your assurance that your guide has met all the necessary state registration requirements. [www.RiversBendOutfitters.com](http://www.RiversBendOutfitters.com)  
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I think they grasped my guide's talk better as they watched me rig a whole, 3 pound shad onto the 7/0 hook and 75 pound leader. They laughed a bit and shook their heads as I taped two railroad spikes together, tied the spikes with some grocery twine and then to the three-way swivel to provide weight to hold the baited rig near the bottom of the pool we were anchored in. Somehow the concept of hooking a fresh water fish over eight feet long had not come home to roost with these two.

I gave a demonstration on how to cast such a cumbersome hook-up (this time without the all too-frequent backlash) and successfully had both of their rods set in no time. The Doctor's bait had no more than hit bottom when it gave the long, steady tattletale pull that told me something approaching the length of my 20' Duckworth was inhaling the king-sized bait on the other end.

"Doc," I said, "stand up, lean back on that rod and set the hook like you were trying to break it." The good Doctor did as told, the tuna rod held and the 50 pound line was bow-string taunt as he immediately replied that he was hung on the bottom. About that time there was a tremendous jerk on his rod that almost pulled him from the boat and about 10 yards from gunwales a 12 foot sturgeon surged out of the water, then crashed back into the Columbia sending a cold spay into the boat. Line was fair ripping off the big Penn reel as the brake screamed a shrill protest. The fight was on!

Some two hours and a twenty minutes later we took some pictures of a tired sturgeon, cut the line short so the barbless hook would fall out and bid farewell to a fish older than any of us in the boat.

The vast reach of water laying between The Dalles Dam and John Day Dam on the Columbia is known as Celilo Pool. Within those waters that often exceed 150 foot depths cruise some true monsters of the deep; white sturgeon that can reach beyond 15' in length and weight,..... well you guess?!

The doctor's trip was typical for a day of catch and release fishing for sturgeon on the Columbia River. This is "trophy class fishing" at its best. The sturgeon fishery on the Columbia is a year around proposition; the period from January to about May offers the possibility of harvesting legal length fish (48" to 60") until the allowable harvest quota set by the Oregon Dept. Fish and Wildlife is reached. After harvest quotas are

reached the sturgeon fishery is strictly catch and release for sport fishing. Boat fishing in the rapid and deep water requires an anchor buoy and five times the depth in length of anchor rope to be safe.

Bank fishing is also a viable method for taking these great fish and the first bright sunshine day early in the spring (or late in the winter, as you wish) you can often see the favored sturgeon holes along the Columbia lined with vehicles, people and anglers eagerly watching the tips of 12 foot poles anchored into rod holders hoping for the jerk that signals "Fish ON!"

Despite their looks, sturgeon are considered exquisite table fare; smoked, baked or stir-fried. Once known as the Czar's fish in other waters, woe be the peasant that ignored that royal declaration.

Choosing to fish from a boat or from the bank, sturgeon require substantial fishing gear. I use 7 foot heavy duty tuna rods topped with big Penn reels and 50 pound line for my clients.

When I fish from the bank I use a 15 foot surf rod and 60 pound line in a large capacity level wind reel. Like most Northwest anglers I'm not particular about weights, railroad spikes, bolts or heavy nuts will do. Barbless 7/0 hooks are more than adequate. Hooks must be kept in sharp to dig into that inner-tube like vacuum hose mouth and barbless hooks come out easy for releasing fish. With everything longer than 5 foot being released sport fishery will surely last.

Baits are personal preference; squid, rotten fish, smelt, anchovy, pickled herring and various commercial concoctions all get a play. The best fishing occurs during the months of June and July when the shad run fills the Columbia with tens of thousand of dead or dying shad. Then the shad is definitely the bait of choice.

Regardless of where, how or why you choose to fish for sturgeon, the Monsters of Celilo are waiting to challenge you.

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