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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : The Unwritten Code of Erie Steelhead Etiquette

The Unwritten Code of Erie Steelhead Etiquette

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Right, so I'm making my 4th steelhead trip of the season later on today (got a hotel room for the night, gonna get up early at hit it at daybreak on Friday). As I've been tracking the stream/ fishing reports recently, I've seen a lot of complaints of bad behavior, and I have seen many of these firsthand. Now, the Erie streams have a lot of fish, but there are many anglers going after them. So, I figured for reviewing, education, or just humor purposes, I'd go over the unwritten code of steelhead etiquette:

1. When you hook a fish, and there are others around you, you should, loudly enough for nearbys to hear, say something along the lines of "fish on!". If it starts to run, you should say "coming up" or "coming down" depending on which way the fish is going. Conversely, if you hear this nearby, and you can see the person with the fish on (for you beginners, this is signified by the pole doubling over, the reel/ drag singing, and the angler often hustling to keep up) it should immediately tell you "get your line out of the water, and get out of the way." You may need to get out of the water as well, depending on where the fish goes. I remember the first steelhead I ever hooked when I was six (heck, my mother still has it on video). After fighting it for awhile, it tried to make one last run. Sure enough, there was some cocky fat moron, who was wading nearby, he moved a little and accidentally stepped on my line, I almost had a stroke lol.

2. Netting a fish is best if you plan to release it, and it makes landing the fish much easier. After all steelhead are very hard to hold, especially underwater. You can keep them alive by keeping them in the water while the fish is under your control. So, I suggest you bring a landing net. However, if you have a net, and someone who hooks a fish doesn't, it is a good practice to put your rod down, and go net their fish for them. Much better than what I saw a younger guy do last time: kicking the already tired fish onto the bank as if it were a football, letting it flop around on the rocks and gravel while you mess with your camera, and then, without reviving the fish an ounce, tossing it back into the water, watching it swim away on its side

3. There should be plenty of space between anglers. I personally like two rod lengths, or about 15 feet, whichever is more feasible. In other words, if you want to work your way into a group of anglers, make sure there is plenty of space for you and those around you to maneuver, cast, and fight fish, without constantly crossing lines. Those who were fishing an area first have the right of way. If you really want to fish a certain pool, and there is a line of anglers there, you can wait until some space opens up, or you can start fishing at the end of the line, and wait for people to leave.

4. When an angler hooks a fish, and has to move from their spot to fight it, it is not an open invitation to move into and steal their spot. Now, if they move far away, it can be hard to gauge if they are leaving the spot for good, in which case, it would be okay to move in and take a few casts. However, if you see the same angler returning, you should move back to your original spot, or if your unsure, it doesn't hurt to ask them.

5. When someone is catching a bunch of fish, and you walk into their spot, rod in hand and ask them what they

are using.. Translation: "May I copy your fly, catch all your fish, and take your spot away from you."

6. While I don't intend to offend locals, and most of them have been more than courteous and helpful, there are a few who think that because they live in the relative area of a stream, they are automatically entitled to act snooty to anyone who dares make the trip up from another town, and fish in their territory. Sorry to say, this is the United States, a free country, and anyone has just as much a right to fish there, as you do.

7. Ok seriously, I know there are some people who post false reports online for whatever reason. They could be people from #6, someone who wants to discourage anglers from fishing so they can have fish to themselves, or whatever. Or it may just be some trolls. A classic example, was when I saw a report before my 2nd trip this year saying something along the lines of "The steelhead season is pretty much done at 20 mile, very few steelhead left." This disappointed me, but I made the trip anyway, since I had already booked the room, and cleared my schedule. Sure enough, I took a ride to 20 mile, thinking I would give it a shot. There was a sparse crowd there, but I saw plenty of pods of fish, and sure enough, I caught 10. I don't know what season the guy was talking about.

So yea, I hope that you got some kicks out of this, and maybe learned a thing or two. Also, anyone who's going to fish the Erie area this weekend, there have been some reports of someone stealing from vehicles parked in creek parking lots, so make sure you lock your vehicle. God bless and tight lines.