

# My Steelhead fishing Adventure

By Megan Boche



Who would have guessed what my life has entailed after being introduced to the world of steelhead fishing along the North Shore. From hobby to career exploration, I have caught steelhead, taught others how to fish, and have studied the fisheries industry.

When I was 12, I was introduced to the Minnesota Lake Superior, North Shore. My family had originally planned a spring break trip to Lutsen Mountain to introduce my sister and I to skiing. The only problem was, when we arrived in Lutsen, there was no snow. Due to the early spring, the trip ended up as an introduction to the trails, parks, and rivers. My father's solution was to go fishing.

As an avid fisherman, he woke up each morning and went to the Temperance River in an attempt to catch a Steelhead. One morning, it happened, he caught his first steelhead at 27 inches. He was so elated, he had pictures to prove it. At the time, I thought: what's the big deal? It's just a fish

The next year, we were off to the North-shore for more adventures and Steelhead fishing. The trip introduced me to observing Steelhead in their environment. We stopped at the Temperance River, for my father to fish. My mom, sister, and I sat on the rocks by the waterfall near the lake and watched the Steelhead attempting to migrate up the falls as they migrated up the river. It was a sight to see.

By the time April 2016 rolled around another trip was in order, with my father, to chase steelhead. The trip became my first introduction to Minnesota Steelheader, a nonprofit organization that educates people about Steelhead fishing. On Saturday, we met up with a fellow Minnesota Steelheader named Aaron Gerlovich. Aaron taught and fished all day with us in an attempt to catch my first steelhead.



The next morning we relocated back to the same river, the Sucker River, and I was able to land my first steelhead. The catch took a total of 7 minutes of reeling and the steelhead was a 24-inch hen. I was thrilled, but I think my father was more excited for me than I was. Within minutes of taking a picture, and releasing the fish back into the river, my father sent a picture of me and the steelhead to Davin Brandt, the President/Director of Minnesota Steelheader.

## My first Steelhead.

It was late afternoon, and my goal was accomplished. Before we started our trip back to the cities, we made a stop, at the French River DNR office, to see if I could tour the facility. We walked in the front door and a young man was standing there. He pointed at me and said, "I know you; I just saw your picture on the Minnesota Steelheader Facebook page". I had no idea who he was, but he introduced himself as Nick Peterson, the DNR Migratory Fish Specialist. He agreed to give me a tour before we went on our way home.

I haven't missed a spring trip to the North Shore since 2016. I've landed a good amount of steelheads but lost a bunch too. I've spent many hours volunteering with the Minnesota DNR on the North Shore with Nick Peterson and the staff at the French River Facility. I've gained a great amount of experience from them. I've also had the great pleasure of fishing with Lisa Murphy, a Minnesota Steelheader, and the Women on the Fly Director. I enjoyed learning from Lisa on the rivers and attending her clinics for women interested in Steelhead fishing.

Since the day I caught the first Steelhead, I knew what I wanted to do with my university education experience as well. In the summer of 2022, I accepted a fisheries internship at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon for 3 months. I assisted the fisheries biologists with field projects related to the conservation and recovery of native fish, particularly bull trout. Over the past few years, my travels and educational opportunities have brought me to Colorado, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Oregon to fish the rivers for trout. I've even expanded fishing to the ocean in Florida.

But now it was my time to teach and give. Last spring, 2023, I was able to take a couple of my classmates from Bemidji State University over to the North Shore for their first Steelhead fishing adventure. After stopping by the French River Facility and visiting Nick Peterson, we headed to the rivers. Me and my friend, Katie, were the first to arrive and fish. An hour passed, and Katie snagged a rock and lost her lure. I offered her my fly rod to fish with in the meantime while I retied her pole. As soon as I handed her the rod, showed her how to use it, and I turned my back, all I heard was "Megan, I got a fish! What do I do?". I was able guide Katie into catching her first steelhead. What a feeling to teach and share my passion for Steelhead fishing with my friends.



Katie's first steelhead.

I haven't stopped there with my journey. In the summer of 2023 I assisted Dr. Loren Miller, a DNR fisheries researcher, at the University of MN, with conservation genetics research projects. I have been the recipient of 5 biology scholarships and was chosen to present my genetic structures of yellow perch in multiple conferences.

It has been an amazing journey, and more is yet to come. On May 3rd, 2024, I will be graduating from Bemidji State University with a double major in Aquatic Biology with an emphasis on fisheries and Biochemistry with an emphasis of cellular and molecular biology. My educational goal is to get PhD degree in natural resources with a focus on conservation genetics.

I don't think I would be where I am today without the help of many people in my life. Thank you to my parents who introduced me to the Minnesota Northshore and the great outdoors. Thank you to my grandparents, who enjoy fishing and live on a lake in Alexandria, MN. Thank you to all the volunteers at Minnesota Steelheader and a special thanks to Davin, Aaron, and Lisa. Thank you to Nick Peterson and the crew at the French River DNR facility. Without these people in my life, I probably never would've immersed myself in Steelhead Fishing and the river systems on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Take a kid fishing; you never know what it might lead to.

Tight Lines Everyone!



Megan Boche