

# NORTHWEST FISHING

EXPLORING THE PNW'S REEL LIFESTYLE

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 10  
AUGUST 2025

## THE ALASKA EXPERIENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: HILLARY HOLMAN

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# EDITOR'S CORNER:

August means one thing in the Pacific Northwest – Salmon, and sometimes (when we are lucky) lots of them! By the time this magazine hits the streets, the pinks will be flooding into Puget Sound. Hannah Pennebaker has a nice list of spots to check out, while Mark Yuasa gives the details on the run and some tips and tactics to give you success, which shouldn't be hard when it comes to 7.8 million fish!

Out here in Montana, the Fort Peck chinook fishery is on fire, with multiple reports of ten-fish days for some boats. Something to keep in mind for those of you with an adventuring spirit.

Speaking of adventures, the NW Fishing TV crew returned from an Epic Trip to Alaska. Read all about it in my article, The Alaska Experience.

This month, there's a diverse selection of articles for your reading pleasure. Dig in and enjoy!

- Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing



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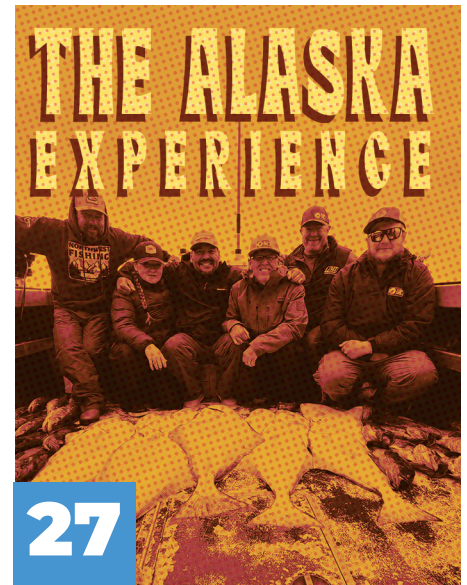
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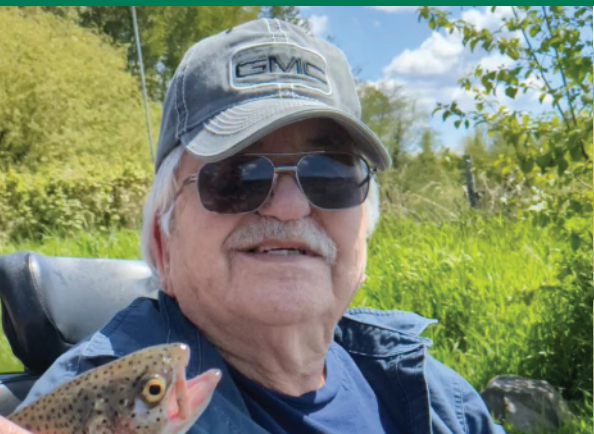
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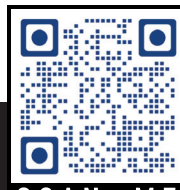
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*\*All of the articles do not necessarily represent the opinion of Northwest Fishing magazine.*



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# MOUNTAIN TROUT AS ART

## WE ARE CAPTIVATED BY TROUT.

And we wonder why. Trout don't love us, they don't love each other, and they don't do anything for their fellow trout, except by accident or by instinct.

But the same could be said of art. We appreciate art for maybe the same reason we love trout. Let's see if the words - art and trout - are interchangeable.

Wynetka Ann Reynolds might have said, *"Anyone who says you can't see a thought simply doesn't know trout."*

For two summers, I spent afternoons and weekends exploring back roads, backcountry and backwaters in streams and lakes down the flanks of Wy'East for a book we called Fishing Mount Hood Country. My co-author, Robert Campbell, covered most of the western water, and I fished more of the east side. Early in the project, Campbell began to send close-ups of trout

- Veda Lake cutthroats, Timothy Lake brookies, Salmon River rainbows - in hand, going back into the water. The imagery seeped into my consciousness, and when I brought East Fork Hood River cutts, or Boulder Lake brooks, or Badger Creek rainbows to the bank, I began to look at each one as a piece of art, at each scale as a stroke of a brush.

We seldom fished the same water twice during the two summers on and off the mountain. We caught bass, sturgeon, steelhead, and salmon, but the fish that defined the effort was the coastal cutthroat. There are many variations. The Clackamas watershed fish were different in coloration from Zigzag River fish, and in bigger lakes, trout coloration varied due to the micro-environments they frequented. We might put the distinct differences down to genetics, habitat, food sources, and light penetration.

Hood River wild fish, where there are fewer trees above the water, and the bottom is light, are bright and shiny. Fish in west-sloping rivers with darker streambeds are often tinted, an adaptation that helps them survive.

While there are a few resident rainbows near the mouth, Campbell's exploration of the upper Clackamas turned up big rainbows, part of a remnant strain that can grow to several pounds in that mountain water. I plan to research that water again soon.

If Goethe had been born to a fly-fishing family rather than to German drama, he might have written, *"There is no surer method of evading the world than by following trout, and no surer method of linking oneself to it than by trout."*

We caught hatchery planters, of course, and the further they were removed from the raceways, the better they looked.





BY GARY LEWIS

Holdovers, fish that had made it through a winter and gained inches and pounds, were the prettiest. We might call them modern trout and appreciate them in that regard.

John Anthony Ciardi could have said, *"Modern trout is what happens when fishermen stop looking at girls and persuade themselves they have a better idea."*

For me, one stream and one fish defined the project. A Still Creek cutthroat, about nine inches long, took a dry fly and threw the hook. The next fish was a bit smaller, but it shone in hand like treasure. I sent a picture to my friend Tye Krueger, and he drew it in every detail - a wild cutt with white tips on

its fins and parr marks still visible on its sides.

Kojiro Tomita might have written it thus: *"It has been said that trout is a tryst, for in the joy of it, maker and beholder meet."*

Conditions seem to force beauty to the surface. Up toward the timberline, an angler finds the most striking examples, wild trout that in other environs would grow to be measured in pounds, not inches. Here, an eight-inch rainbow is mature, with white tips on the edges of his fins and a tint of rose in his gill plates, dark spots all the way to the tail.

G.K. Chesterton might have put it this way: *"Trout consists of limitation. The most beautiful part of every picture is the frame."*

Here in the Northwest, we have the run of an ancient gallery. The price of admission is a fishing license and the will to seek it. *"All trout requires courage,"* with apologies to Anne Tucker.

In the passage of time, we become collectors of art, the images stored in digital files and memories. And sometimes we make that beauty part of ourselves with brook trout grilled over a campfire.

If Scott Adams had been consulted, he might have offered, *"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Trout is knowing which ones to keep."*



## GARY LEWIS BIO

Gary Lewis is an award-winning author, TV host, speaker and photographer. Recent books include *Fishing Central Oregon*, 6th Edition, *Fishing Mount Hood Country* and *Bob Nosler Born Ballistic*. Gary has hunted and fished in eight countries on three continents and in the islands of the South Pacific. Born and raised in the Northwest, he has been walking forest trails and running rivers for as long as he can remember. Lewis is twice past president of the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and a recipient of NOWA's Enos Bradner Award.



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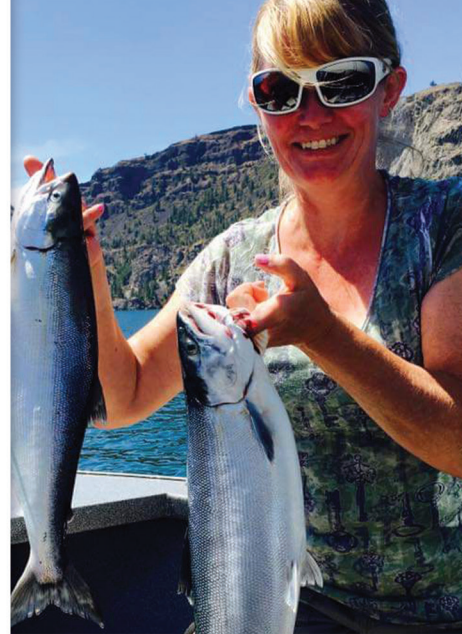
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# PINKS ARE HERE

FISHING



**BY MARK YUASA**

A breakdown of the pink salmon forecasts are:

**Green River**, 1,835,366;  
**Hood Canal**, 2,420,610;  
**Nisqually River**, 1,503,704;  
**Nooksack River**, 97,370;  
**Skagit River**, 468,073;  
**Snohomish River**, 315,942;  
**Puyallup River**, 709,292;  
**Strait of Juan de Fuca**, 294,503;  
**South Puget Sound areas**, 503,000.

A barrage of pink salmon are now beelining into Puget Sound, and the next couple of months should provide ample opportunities in many marine and freshwater areas.

The hype about an expected Puget Sound pink salmon forecast of nearly 7.8 million — up 70% from the 10-year cycle average — began when the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) unveiled the 2025 salmon forecasts on Feb. 28.

If the prediction pans out, it will be the third-largest total return on record, up from a 2023 forecast of 3.95 million and an actual return of 7.22 million. In southern British Columbia, the Fraser River pink salmon forecast is an epic 27 million and will contribute to fisheries in northern marine areas like the San Juan Islands.

The Stillaguamish River, pink forecast of 117,322 is a low forecast compared to past years and won't allow for pink fishing opportunities in Marine Area 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and the river itself.

There will be a two-bonus pink salmon daily limit for Marine Areas 5, 6, 7, 8-1, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 during the August to September timeframe. Opening and closure dates vary for each area. Refer to the WDFW fishing regulations webpage at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations>

or the Washington Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet at <https://www.eregulations.com/washington/fishing/> for specific dates of when the two-bonus pink salmon daily limit applies to each marine area.

## **RECOGNIZING A PINK VERSUS A CHINOOK**

It is vital for anglers to be able to know the difference between a pink and a young Chinook. Especially when fishing in marine areas.

A pink has very large black spots on the caudal fin and back, and heavy oval-shaped black splotches on the upper and lower lobes of the tail. They also have a white mouth, a few teeth (if any), with a black gum line and tongue. Their scales are very small with no silver pigment on the tail.

Their nickname “humpies” or “humpy” comes from the dramatic **AUGUST 2025 | 11**

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hump that forms on the back of male pink salmon as they return to rivers and approach spawning time. Males also develop gnarly hooked upper jaw during spawning season.

In the marine environment, a Chinook has large black spots on back, dorsal fin, and both the upper and lower lobes of the tail. They have a dark mouth and black gum line and large prominent teeth, and a silver pigment on the tail.

A pink salmon averages 3 to 5 pounds but can grow up to 15 pounds or larger. They are the fastest growing of the five Pacific salmon species and mainly return in large numbers during odd-numbered years after spending two years in the ocean before migrating to local rivers.

The Washington state saltwater record for a pink salmon was caught on Aug. 25, 2001, by Jeff Bergman at Possession Point and

weighed 11.56 pounds. The freshwater state record was caught on Oct. 11, 2007, by Adam Stewart in the Stillaguamish River (closed in 2025) and weighed 15.40 pounds.

The Puget Sound pink return usually begin to arrive in July, and the run peaks in mid-August. In South Puget Sound, the bulk returns during the last week of August and early September. Pink fishing in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound was very productive in 2021 and 2019 during late summer.

### TIPS & TACTICS

A pink likes pink and will chase just about any lure, spoon, jig, or fly as long as the color is hot pink. Part of the reason why they're attracted to anything pink is that the color resembles plankton or krill, which is part of their main diet. While I direct your attention to that specific color scheme, be sure



to keep red, chartreuse, and orange-colored presentations in your tackle box as well.

Smaller-size presentations seem to work best like a pink mini plastic squid (aka a hoochie) or spoons tied behind a 13- to 16-inch leader to a 1/0 white colored or silver dodger. You can also toss a pink colored jig and let it sink about a foot per second from the surface down to about 80 feet. Once you feel the jig go slack, reel up and don't set the jig hard because a pink has a soft jawline. You can also cast and retrieve a pink mini hoochie jig with a single or tandem 1/0 pink- or red-colored hooks.

Other lures include a pink Rotator trailed behind a small pink plastic "hoochie" squid with a single or tandem 1/0 pink- or red-colored hooks. Let it flutter down to the desired depth and then slowly retrieve from shore or a boat.

Fly anglers can also get in on the pink fishing action by casting a pink clouser fly with a 7 or 8-weight fly rod and a sinking line.

When fishing from a boat, it is absolutely necessary to troll really slow, anywhere from 1.3 to 1.8 mph at most, depending on current, tide,

and wind. Many prefer to troll with the tide or current instead of battling against it. Look for pink schools on your depth finder and also watch the surface for fish rolling and jumping.

Around an hour before and right after a flood tide or a slack tide is the peak time to catch a pink. The bite can be fairly good throughout the day, but early morning, just before and right after first light is best. The evening bite just before sunset can also be productive.

By the time you read this magazine, the front end of the pink run should have arrived in the Strait of Juan de Fuca at Neah Bay, and from Sekiu to Port Angeles.

In Puget Sound, their peak arrival is August off Midchannel Bank at Port Townsend, Possession Bar, the west side of Whidbey Island, Pilot Point, and Point No Point, Jefferson Head, Richmond Beach, the east side of Bainbridge Island, West Point south of Shilshole Bay, Alki Point to Lincoln Park in West Seattle. By mid- to late-August, look for pink salmon in southern Puget Sound south of the Narrows Bridge. The San Juan Islands will also be pink central as the expected

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huge return to the Fraser River in southern B.C., and fish turning south into Puget Sound should all contribute to the island chain fishery.

Prime shoreline locations are Deception Pass; Fort Casey, Keystone, Bush Point and Lagoon Point off the west side of Whidbey Island; Point Wilson and Fort Casey State Park near Port Townsend; Point No Point; Edmonds Pier; Alki Point and Lincoln Park in West Seattle; Richmond Beach; Redondo Beach; Dash Point State Park; Seacrest Pier in West Seattle;

Browns Point Lighthouse; and Point Defiance Park Boathouse or Les Davis piers in Tacoma. By late August and into September, most of the pink salmon will begin to arrive in Puget Sound rivers and streams. Anglers should check fishing regulations for which rivers and streams

are open or closed. You can follow WDFW's The Salmon Fishing Current blog: summer and fall 2025 edition at <https://wdfw.medium.com/the-salmon-fishing-current-blog-summer-and-fall-2025-edition-0834fb38377c> for in-season salmon fishery information.

## MARK YUASA

Mark Yuasa is Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Communications Manager and longtime local fishing and outdoor writer.



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# INTERVIEW WITH A WELL-SCHOOLED KOKANEE

## PART TWO

BY GARY GORDON



**KOKANEE:** Hmm. So what wisdom do you now possess after tempering theory with experience?

**DUDE:** I would say the most important thing is that I have a lot more to learn.

**KOKANEE:** Then you really have spent a lot of time on the water. My buds and I get a kick out of all the experts out there who spend fortunes on all of the most expensive boats, the highest-priced electronics, sometimes all for naught. Well, at least they get a nice boat ride.

**DUDE:** I admit I don't have the fanciest of boats, but it is adequate. My sonar is color, and it is dialed in. I do have reliable downriggers, proper releases, and a trolling motor. I did spend the dollars on getting quality reels to match the ultralight rods. I can measure water temperature at depth. Got the rubber net, so the trailing hooks don't break off anymore.

**KOKANEE:** And what did having the proper equipment do for your success?

**DUDE:** Well, I sure eat a lot more kokanee than before. Using a very short leader behind the dodger really helped, as did using only minimum drag – letting my rod and reel work together.

**KOKANEE:** So, did you figure out why many kokanee fishermen lose their fish during the fight?

**DUDE:** I learned early. There is no “try” – only “do.”

**KOKANEE:** OK, Yoda – explain yourself.

**DUDE:** What seemed apparent to me is that the average fisherman, once a kokanee is hooked, makes several mistakes trying to get the fish to the boat. First, they do not take the slack out of the line as soon as possible. They don't reel fast enough to get the tension back to the rod. And some don't stop reeling fast once that point is reached and jerk

the hooks out of the fish's mouth. So, lack of tension and too much tension will result in that dreaded long-distance release.

**KOKANEE:** What is the second thing?

**DUDE:** Many of these long-distance release failures seem to be caused by the fisherman trying to pull the fish out of the water. They have their rods pointed to the sky at about 11 o'clock, and then put the tension on the rod. I figured out that the very last thing you want to do is get that attracting dodger to the surface.

**KOKANEE:** Why is that?

**DUDE:** The surface of the dodger interacts with the surface of the water, and that can become a significant point of resistance, allowing the fish to escape the hooks – something like too much tension when you are reeling in.

**KOKANEE:** So what is it you do?

**DUDE:** Once I get hooked up and eliminate the line slack, I turn sideways to the fish, forming a 90-degree angle between the fish and my rod. I then lower my rod tip to the water and work the fish by applying and keeping sideways pressure on the fish at all times. When I bend the rod away from the fish, I know what the fish is doing as I can feel it. As the fish gives way, I continue taking in line but keeping that rod bent a bit, keeping that line pressure on.

**KOKANEE:** Do you adjust the drag during the fight?

**DUDE:** Not ever.

**KOKANEE:** How much drag is correct?

**DUDE:** Just enough drag to keep the rod properly loaded in the downrigger without the line going out of the reel.

**KOKANEE:** What about if the koke is really taking line?

**DUDE:** Excellent. Big fish. That's why I have the ultralight rod. It allows me to exert proper pressure on the fish with my sideways approach, regardless of the size of the fish. The trick with the big fish is to know when the fish is heading back to you. Make sure you take in that line to keep that tension in the line.

Keep bending the rod away from the fish, then reel in the slack. Learning just how much pressure to exert is the trick. Only experience can perfect the technique. However, once you get it, it becomes second nature.

**KOKANEE:** Sounds like you have really learned a lot.

**DUDE:** Learning how to properly fight the fish made fishing way more enjoyable. And it resulted in way more fish in the boat. Making the rod and reel work together works on all species of fish -- not just kokanee. So if I'm out on the ocean after big salmon, I use the same methods.

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If I am combat fishing along the river, the same technique.

**KOKANEE:** Sounds like you have really come a long way. But are you ready to take your learning to the next level?

**DUDE:** Let's get 'er done.

**KOKANEE:** As I take you through all this new stuff, the best way to orient yourself is to reflect on each concept as it applies to what you have already learned.

**DUDE:** I have been reading all I can. But there is a lot of bad information out there that is passed off as expert. The one person who really seems to give reliable information is that Fish With Gary guy.

**KOKANEE:** I would agree with you on that. He gives it to you straight. But consider this: he is really smart, but he is no kokanee.

**DUDE:** So for trolling, the standard setup is using a dodger as an attractor with a lure attached a short distance behind it – really short. Of course, the exception is the apex type lure, which needs room to move – so more like 18-20 inches. Some kind of scent is applied to the lure. This setup is unknown in nature, so why does it work to catch kokanee?

**KOKANEE:** For that, I need to take you back in history to the time of King Nerka. He was the originator of “not in my neighborhood.” Essentially, anything that invaded Nerka's space was run out of Dodge. His aggression became both a rallying cry and a lifestyle for the entire species ever since.

**DUDE:** Really?

**KOKANEE:** To us, lo these many generations later, it is not fake news. And getting run out of Dodge is how the “dodger” was named.


**DUDE:** I don't have to believe that, do I? No need to answer. Coming to the attracting dodger for a look see is a far cry from actually biting the lure.

**KOKANEE:** Glad you are staying focused. Technically, the dodger's disturbance action provokes that attraction response. Getting the fish to react to bite stimulants is the trick. Notice I said stimulants – plural. You want the fish to have a biting response to the bite stimulants.

**DUDE:** So break it down for me, please.

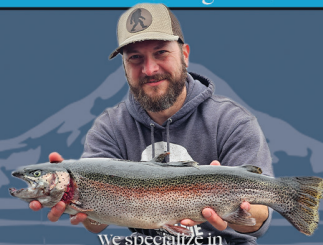
**KOKANEE:** For kokanee, the first real bite stimulant is scent. And not just any scent. It has to be the kind of scent that is both compatible with the

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kokanee's natural biting response and sufficient on the other hand to overcome that initial attraction response. While you may be 100% successful in attracting the fish, you still don't eat dinner if the fish does not bite. And you need that biting response to be so powerful that it becomes to main focus for the fish.

**DUDE:** So what is the second bite stimulant?

**KOKANEE:** The second is visible, contrasting color.

**DUDE:** So why is scent first?

**KOKANEE:** Scent is dispersed into the water. We salmon species are known for our

exceptional scent detection – measured in parts per million. Visible, contrasting color is visual for the fish at only about 20 inches or so. Scent is detectable over a far greater distance than 20 inches.

**DUDE:** Since the scent has a source, and if that source coincides with the visible, contrasting color, that is why they work together.

**KOKANEE:** Exactly.

**DUDE:** Remind me again about the 20 inches.

**KOKANEE:** It is often a challenge to get humans to accept that the human eye is vastly different than the kokanee eye. We simply cannot focus. We see near and far at the same time. We kokanee have relatively good contrast vision for dark and light, but very limited vision for color. We have to be about 20 inches from a target to discern its colors other than light and dark. And that color has to be right in front of our snout. So, as we approach a target, there reaches a finite point where the vision for light and dark suddenly flashes to color – and we could be talking about a distance of a quarter inch. Within that 20 inches – color; outside that 20

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inches – shades of dark and light. Just barely inside those 20 inches is suddenly an explosion of color that a quarter inch before was only light and dark. That color flash, working with scent, creates its own biting response.

**DUDE:** You said visible, contrasting color more than once.

**KOKANEE:** Indeed, I did. On purpose. If the color is not visible, there is no color flash, no matter how close the fish gets to the target. We know that ordinary colors turn black at some point down the water column. However, as you recall from our last session,

fluorescent colors do not fade provided there is some light to act on them

**DUDE:** Right. So even if there is only green, blue, indigo, and violet light left at that particular depth, a fluorescent orange with still be bright orange, even though there is no orange light to act on it.

**KOKANEE:** Don't get me wrong. Black is a good fishing color if it contrasts with a fluorescent white or natural glow. Remember too that black will contrast with the color of the water except at deeper depths.

**DUDE:** And I do recall from our last discussion that the term “UV” is

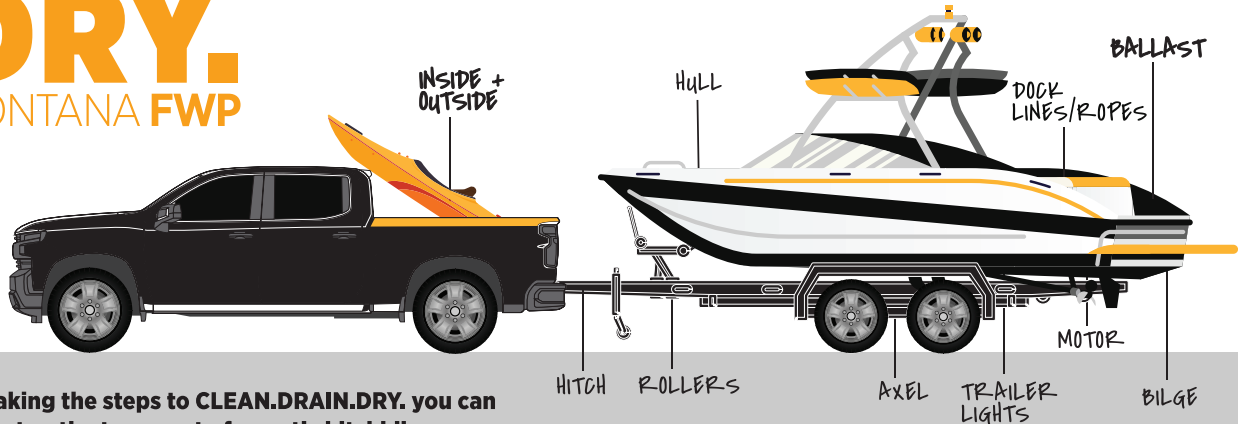


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marketing speak for fluorescent. I also recall that UV light technically does not penetrate the water column more than just a few inches. So it is not UV light reacting with the lure colors. Visible light penetrates the water column, but is absorbed in stages as you go deeper in the water column. It is visible light that reacts with the lure colors.

**KOKANEE:** Exactly. Contrast is necessary because it makes the color easier to see. Not for humans, but for us fish.

**DUDE:** So, in tackle presentation, it is more important to understand how kokanee will actually

see the presentation, rather than to evaluate it from a human perspective.

**KOKANEE:** But the one thing I can't tell you is why a color or color combination works so well one day and not the next. It can even change hour to hour.

I just know that it does. And most kokanee get the color change memo all at once.

**DUDE:** Sorta like getting a text?

**KOKANEE:** It is against the law to swim and use our cell phones at the same time.

**DUDE:** So to sum up this bite stimulant concept, we need

our presentation to have abundant scent and bright, contrasting visible colors to be the most effective. For scent, most people use corn, or corn soaked in some kind of scent. From my view, adding corn to my lure makes the lure droop and interferes with its action. From your view, is this what is happening?

**KOKANEE:** You are correct. Weighing down an ultralight lure with corn does indeed interfere with the lure's action, and it also acts as a drag. This is particularly true with the slow speeds that kokanee fishermen are fond of using.



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White shoepeg corn does work because it contains a particular enzyme that acts as a bite stimulant. So is it the corn or the enzyme in the corn that works? It's the enzyme. So if you can deliver the bite stimulant enzyme without having the weight of the corn, you keep the action of the lure intact.

**DUDE:** How is that accomplished?

**KOKANEE:** In the past few years, there have been some significant industry efforts put into the science of scents. The results have been amazing. Scents now come in liquids and gels. You may want to try the gels on beaded spinners, simply putting the gel on the beads only – leaving the hooks bare. For the squids – hoochies. Try using only the liquid stuff. Simply dip the whole rigged up squid into the liquid, shake off a little of the excess, and you are ready to go. Again, leave the hooks bare. On spinner bugs, use a bit of gel on the body segments. Leave the hooks bare.

**DUDE:** Let me guess. Leaving the hooks bare eliminates the short bite. The fish is concentrating on the color and scent, and when the fish strikes the lure, the hooks have already

done the deed.

**KOKANEE:** A year ago, you would not have gotten that.

**DUDE:** I guess there might be another good reason to use the gels and liquids. If there is a short bite, you don't have to bring everything up to check and see if you still have corn, because you are not using corn.

**KOKANEE:** And using the scents instead of corn puts way more attractive scent on your lure.

**DUDE:** I don't suppose you would mind telling me which scents are the most effective?

**KOKANEE:** That's right. Don't suppose.

**DUDE:** C'mon. I have been working so hard at getting better. Cut me some slack.

**KOKANEE:** Does your tackle box contain just one dodger and one lure?

**DUDE:** No. I have a lot of stuff to throw at them.

I call it my arsenal.

**KOKANEE:** And the reason why you have an arsenal?

**DUDE:** Because I can't tell from one day to the next which is going to be the most effective.

**KOKANEE:** Same with the scents.

**DUDE:** Oh.

**KOKANEE:** Here is a sampling



of what my rivals have fallen on: Bloody Tuna, Tuna Garlic, Garlic, Kokanee Special, Mike's Glo-Scent, and anything with anise. I'm not saying these are exclusive. Make sure you have an arsenal of scents. And the favorite scent for one body of water may not work very well in another body of water. Be sure and record your notes so you have a good record.

**DUDE:** I am faithful to my collection of 3x5 note cards. I record everything I can data-wise. Here is an example. I found out that pink, as a color, has a lighter, more natural version as well as the hot pink "in your face" kind of color. One day, the hot pink is tops, and on another day, the lighter pink rules. The pink stuff works pretty well earlier in the season, and then tapers off a bit. Then, toward the later part of the season, it seems to pick up again.

Do you know why that is?

**KOKANEE:** I subscribe to several audio journals, and that concept has been explored. While there appear to be opposing camps, the best explanation for me is that, later in the season, maturing kokanee are undergoing hormonal changes, which makes the

cones in their eyes more sensitive to pink. See my kype? Since I got this kype thing going on, pink seems a bit more intense.

**DUDE:** So, no help on the early season?

**KOKANEE:** Sounds like you don't need any help.

**DUDE:** I guess that is a compliment. One thing I have found is pretty consistent. If I'm out later in the afternoon, using chartreuse works pretty well down to about 35 feet.

**KOKANEE:** Well enough about color, let's move on.

**TO BE CONTINUED...**



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# 10 PINK SALMON SHORE LOCATIONS

BY HANNAH PENNEBAKER

Of all the Pacific salmon species, pink salmon are the most common. 7.76 million pink salmon are expected to return to the Puget Sound this year; the third largest run on record! This is going to be a great year to teach newbies how to fish or learn a new fishery yourself. Pink salmon are snappy, eager biters, perfect for kids or new fishermen. They are named for the pink color of their meat. Speaking of their meat, they taste great grilled or smoked, especially when bled and iced right away.

August is a great time of year to target pink salmon in both the ocean and rivers. They run close to the shore, enabling many bank fishermen the chance at getting a limit. Let's go over 5 Puget Sound saltwater locations and 5 freshwater

locations to get you started.

## LINCOLN PARK

A favorite beach for Seattle locals! There is plenty of room to spread out on this large beach. It is a bit of a walk from the parking lot, but don't let that deter you. The fishing here is quite good! The fish run close to shore all the way up and down the beach. Bring your pink Buzz Bombs!

## POINT NO POINT

Probably the steepest beach on the list, Point No Point is a beautiful spot to fish. It has an old lighthouse with an adjoining park. The main parking lot is closed down, but you can park at the nearby overflow parking lot and walk to the beach. Make sure to look at a tide chart before you go. The current tends to rip here, which can lead to tangled lines.

## PICNIC POINT

This is another beach that has good concentrations of pink salmon. Bring your waders and watch for schools swimming by. This beach is popular with fly fishermen; make sure to leave them plenty of room to cast. If the fish aren't biting, Edmonds Pier and Mukilteo Beach are both nearby.

## EDMONDS PIER

Though you'll definitely have company, especially on weekends, this is a fantastic pier for catching all types of salmon. You'll want to have a plan for bringing your fish up on the dock, however. Most people bring a crab ring and haul their catch up that way. Since you're in an elevated spot, it's easier to see fins and tails that signal when the schools of salmon are coming.

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can find spots to drift fish, toss spinners, and twitch jigs. The river is called the Duwamish as it gets closer to the mouth. Start in the Duwamish early in the season and follow the fish as they move into the upper river. Most of the river is clear and shallow, so you'll be able to see the schools coming. If they aren't biting at one spot, move to another.

### **SNOHOMISH RIVER**

One of the most popular rivers for fishing pink salmon, there is plenty of shore access here. Thomas Eddy Park and Lord Hill Park have many trails you can walk to find your spot. Many anglers here drift Dick Nite spoons with good success. There are several other parks with good shore access on the lower river.

### **NISQUALLY RIVER**

This beautiful South Sound river doesn't have much bank access, but it is projected to get an especially strong run of pinks this year. The Nisqually River Public Access has a trail and some rocks that you can fish off of. Bring a lot of extra gear; there are some nasty snags in the river.



### **LES DAVIS PIER**

This is another saltwater pier that has gained popularity since Dash Point and Redondo Piers were both closed. There are lots of nearby amenities, including a small cafe near the entrance of the pier. Schools of fish swim by frequently during the peak of the season. You'll want to bring a crab ring here to bring your fish up to the dock.

### **PUYALLUP RIVER**

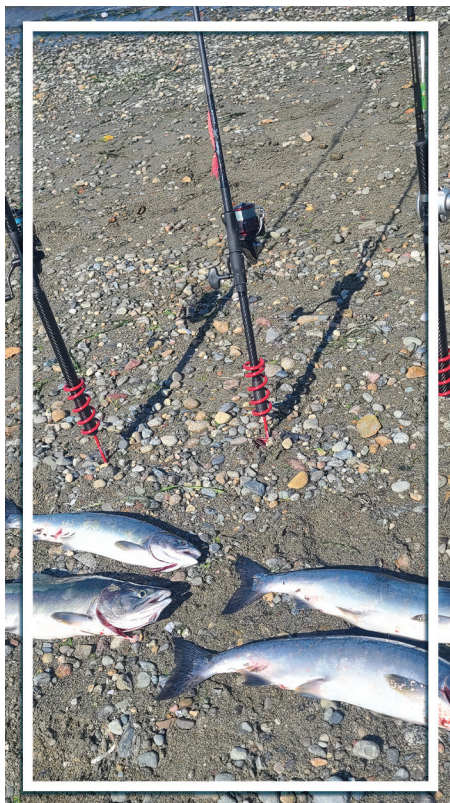
Like many other fishermen, I learned how to catch pinks on this river! There is a ton of shore access, but it can be crowded, especially

on weekends. Tread carefully when wading- it can be almost impossible to spot submerged boulders and trees in the murky water. Most people here drift pink corkies and yarn. Levee Road and River Road near the lower part of the river offer good bank access. Look for gravel bars and bends in the river. The Puyallup runs into the Carbon River, which also has great shore access, but typically opens later in the year. Look for parks and access points near Orting.

### **GREEN RIVER**

This river has a surprising amount of bank access. Numerous parks and trails dot the river. You





## SKAGIT RIVER

Most of the shore access here is at boat ramps and gravel bars. The folks at Holiday Sports in Burlington are always willing to share hot spots with anglers. Just about any gear will work on this river. There are shallow, fast runs that are perfect for drifting as well as slow, deep pockets for twitching jigs or throwing out a bobber. Versatile anglers will do well on this river.

## TACKLE

For Puget Sound beaches, I'd recommend bringing at least an 8-foot rod; casting distance is important. Make sure it can sling about an

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ounce of lead. Pink Buzz Bombs are the standard lure. Toss it out to schools of fish and try different jigging speeds and patterns to see what works. Make sure not to dunk your reel in sand or saltwater, and always rinse it thoroughly when you come home.

For rivers, you can use the same rod and reel you used for the beaches. Tie on a corky and yarn if you want to drift fish. About 4 to 6 feet of leader should do the trick. It takes some time to be able to feel the difference between the bottom and a fish bite. Bring a few different weights so you can adjust

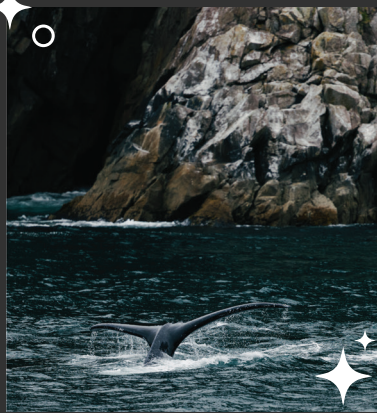
according to the speed of the current- you want to tick bottom every few seconds, not drag on it. Pink spinners and twitching jigs will also catch fish.

Before heading out, always make sure to check the latest rules and regulations. Emergency closure can and does happen. Pinch your barbs in the Sound and rivers with barbless requirements. Make sure to bring a cooler with ice: pink salmon don't taste as good when they're left flopping on the bank.





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# THE ALASKA EXPERIENCE

BY MIKE CAREY



**Alaska** – it conjures up many images, and well it should. Our largest state is home to vast mountains, forests, and tundra. Rugged coastlines and salmon-filled rivers call to both casual and hardcore anglers. The opportunities seem almost endless.

It was my third trip to our 49th state. The previous trips to the Alagnack River and Thorn Bay were beautiful experiences, and yet there was something “missing”. Granted, imagining a single trip to Alaska could capture its essence was a fool’s errand. Be that as it may, I had high expectations for our latest trip.

Northwest Fishing TV had been invited by Alaska Kenai Adventures to stay for several days and get a taste of the Kenai Peninsula. I, Eric Magnuson, and Rob and Hillary Holman travelled to Seattle on June 19th for the flight to Anchorage.

Our trip started off ominously as the flight was cancelled at 3am. Fortunately for us, Keith, owner of Alaska Kenai Adventures (which I’ll sometimes refer to as AKA) received a phone alert and promptly found us an alternate flight via Juno. A quick 3-hour flight to Alaska had turned into a delayed departure and a 4-hour layovers.

The flight from Juno to Anchorage was nothing short of breathtaking. Looking out the window, I watched as a seemingly endless vista of snow-covered mountaintops passed underneath us, glaciers glistening in the evening sun. Finally, below us was Anchorage, looking much larger than I had imagined it would be. We landed around 5 pm, loaded up our belongings into our rental cars, and started the three-hour drive to the lodge.



The route to the Kenai Peninsula is one of the most scenic drives I have ever been on in my life. Mountains rose all around us, and a mixture of conifer forests and tundra greeted us at every turn. Purple lupins were in full bloom and dotted the roadside. This was the Alaska that I had been dreaming of. 150 miles later, we turned down a gravel road and arrived at the Alaska Kenai Adventures Lodge. Waiting for us were Keith, the owner, and Pierce, the General Manager of the lodge. After giving us a quick tour, we were shown our rooms. It was 10 pm and still broad daylight.

*"Our summer days have twenty hours of daylight,"* Keith explained, *"And night is more like dusk. Blackout curtains are very popular around here"*. I had brought a sleep mask, so no worries there – plus a twenty-hour travel day had our group ready to hit the hay. Pierce let us know we would be leaving at 5 am for a day of trout fishing on the Kenai River. Our comfortable beds awaited, and I quickly fell asleep in anticipation of the coming days of fishing adventures.

Alaska Kenai Adventures

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provides lodging and meals, and they have partnerships with guides and charters throughout the Kenai Peninsula. As a facilitator for trips, they have built up a cadre of outstanding businesses they work with to provide their clientele with fishing, hunting, bear watching, fly-in trips, and more. If you have a trip on your bucket list, they can likely help you, or if you're overwhelmed by all the options, Keith and Pierce can help you there as well. Our first day featured fly fishing for rainbow trout on the Kenai River. We met our guides from Chasing Tails Guide Service and got the rundown on gear and techniques. The plan was to side drift with egg and flesh imitations. A strike indicator was attached to the leader, and our 7/8 weight rods would be up to the task of handling the larger rainbows. Our guide, Captain Alex, explained that the rainbows would follow the salmon and gorge themselves on eggs and decomposing salmon carcasses. Rainbows up to ten pounds were a distinct possibility. The Kenai in this location reminded me a little of the Cowlitz River, size-wise, but with a beautiful turquoise hue to



it. Side-drifting using this method is ideal for those who don't have a lot of experience with fly rods, as much of the positioning can be done by a skillful guide maneuvering the boat downstream, similar to side drifting for steelhead.

The day was filled with catching; however, we were unable to find the big ones, instead landing fish in the 14-20" range. I'll take that any day of the week! We returned after a full day of fishing to enjoy a culinary delight by lodge chef Stephan. King salmon in a teriyaki glaze, rice, fresh vegetables, and not a crumb left on my plate. Local wines and beers were a nice touch, finished off by a tasty tiramisu dessert, perfect.



Our second day was another river trip, this time on the Kasilof River, which was open for hatchery kings and native sockeye. We were only a few miles inland from the saltwater bay so the sockeye in particular were chrome bright. We fished with Hook Line Land Em guide service. Starting the day backtrolling spinners off river divers, we soon settled into the rhythmic vibration of our rod tips, until we heard an excited commotion coming from Rob and Hillary's drift boat. Rob had a nice king on the line. We watched him battle the strong king from the top to the bottom of the run, and saw his guide swoop the fish into the net and the boat. A keeper! As we drifted by, Rob held up a beautiful king we guessed was in the 16-18 pound range, chrome bright.

Back to the task at hand, we backed slowly down the next drift, taking in the sights of bald eagles feeding and the occasional moose walking the shoreline. Suddenly, my rod doubled over to the pulls of a big king. "Wait for it..." our guide instructed. "Now!" he called out. Pulling the rod out of the rod holder, it was obvious this was not a

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hatchery king. Line began peeling off my reel, and about thirty yards behind the boat, a massive tail broke the surface, followed by what looked to be at least a twenty-five-pound king, bright red flank glistening in the sun. The back-and-forth battle was on! I worked the powerful fish slowly back to the boat, alternately gaining and losing line until the line counter on the reel read twenty feet. At the same time, we had reached the end of the drift and the fish had a choice to make – go through the fast water to the next section or run upriver into the

pool we had just backed down. Taking a sudden run upriver, the big king passed our boat on the right, and as he came even with my rod, I felt the sickening pop of the hook pulling out of whatever corner of the mouth he was hooked in.

A communal sigh of disappointment for the fish just lost, our guide commented, "*That was a nice native. You would've had to release him. What an amazing fish.*" Indeed, it was, and my disappointment was tempered by the opportunity to even hook and play it for as long as I did.

Back to fishing, we had drifted by various groups of shore anglers that were fishing for sockeye. Seeing these chrome-bright, hard-fighting fish was too hard to resist. After a group conference, we decided it was time to get some sockeye.

Sockeye fishing in Alaska is a different technique from Washington State. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the fish entering the river have a very short run to their spawning grounds, and as such, Washington angling techniques of

trolling are out. Second, the runs are massive. On the Kasilof, for example, the return was estimated to be over 500,000 fish. On the Kenai River, Alaska is looking to have almost a million sockeye return. With that kind of numbers, the biomass can easily handle what Alaskans call subsistence harvesting. Which means there are more than enough fish to keep the runs strong and healthy. That said, Alaska does monitor the run, and our current limit would be three fish (this was bumped up to six on

the day we left). Residents in some communities are given another twenty-five fish later in the season for subsistence.

The technique Alaskans use is what we in Washington call flossing. The process is simple swing a one-ounce weight with a six-foot leader straight out in front of you. The sockeye travel within ten feet of shore, so long casts are not needed. Drift for five seconds and give a good rip at the end of that five-second drift. The single barbed hook slides through the sockeye's open mouth, and it's fish



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on with six to ten pounds of chrome, angry sockeye ten feet away. Remarkably, the number of foul-hooked fish is quite low. The hook must be in the mouth, or the fish is to be released. There is a certain level of skill required, and we watched many anglers who just didn't get it. But for us, a frantic half-hour later, our group's limits were on the shore. I know that many of you reading this are shaking your head and saying how unsporting this is. I mulled it over and decided that I was in this fishing culture, and here in Alaska, it was an accepted way to fish for sockeye. According to our guide, this is the only possible way to catch them, as they had tried other methods over the years and nothing had worked. That said, I did find myself daydreaming about fishing one of the lakes these fish return to and seeing if they would strike bare hooks behind a dodger off of a downrigger. It would be lights-out fishing for sure if they did! Day Two came to an end, and we returned to the lodge; this time treated to perfectly cooked ribeye steak. The gang at Alaska Kenai Adventures sure know how to treat their guests!

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Saltwater fishing in Alaska is a given. With thousands of miles of coastline and offshore locations to fish, AKA hooked us up with Alaskan Adventure Guides & Outfitters out of Homer to fish in the Gulf of Alaska. We would be targeting halibut and groundfish, fishing anywhere from 200-480 feet deep. Our luck had held up as we experienced a third day of pleasant temps in the 60s and mostly clear skies, affording us spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. The wind was light, making for calm seas and an easy ride.

En route to our fishing locations, we were entertained by porpoise and killer whale pods. The majesty of Alaska was in full display! Pulling up to our first drift, deckhand Savana had our group baited up and ready to go. Gear down, we soon were feeling the tap-taps of fish. In quick order, we caught our boat limits of 4-5 pound black sea bass. That out of the way, Captain Corey moved us to the next location, which he informed us would be a good spot to get our "unders". The regs for halibut where we were fishing called for one fish



under 27", and one fish of any size. In a twist of irony, Captain Corey told us it was actually easier to get the over-sized halibut than the under-sized ones. He turned out to be right, as we took the next hour to grind out the small fish. Mission

accomplished, Corey called out, *"Bring 'em up, we're moving to a spot that we have had good luck on for bigger fish!"* Our final location had us fishing in 480 feet of water, offshore of a group of islands that I swore were right out of the casting department for Jurassic Park. Sheer rocky cliffs with crashing waves along the shoreline and wooded peaks and valleys made it hard to pay attention to our rods. Soon enough, cries of "Fish on!" rang out, as did the gaff. These halibut were indeed bigger, too big to net. At around 30-50 pounds, they were the perfect eating size.

Those 100-pound halibut are amazing to see, but as they get past 70 pounds, many are older females that have tougher meat, and, more importantly, produce thousands of eggs with each spawning, making them essential for maintaining the fishery. The hold steadily filled up with halibut, and before we knew it was time to head back to the harbor. But not before one last stop... Our final adventure on this "Experiencing Alaska" trip was low-tide clam-digging. What is unique about this experience is that you get on the boat while it's on a

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trailer, and are then backed down by a tractor into the surf. The captain then drives the boat off the trailer, and away you go!

We were clamming with Cook Inlet Clamming, owner and Captain, Sarah Brooks, and her daughter Savannah. Savannah was in the process of obtaining her captain's license. At 19 years of age, she had been working with her mom from an early age, deckhanding and boats, fishing, and clamming were in her DNA. Crossing the inlet, we arrived at the secluded beach where we would be digging clams.

There were already a couple of boats that were high and dry on the beach, and around a dozen people were digging away. We had anchored in 1 foot of water and waited for 15 minutes for the tide to recede, then it was off with our clam guns and buckets. This section of Cook Inlet had a generous limit of two 5-gallon buckets, substantially more than Washington's 15-clam limit.

Clam shows were everywhere, and I started using the clam gun, easy to learn, but tiring to use. After pulling up half a bucket of clams, my back and legs were getting sore.

About then, the tide began to turn, and we were called back to the boat – saved by the tide!

With that, our Alaska Experience trip had come to an end. Four days of fishing and clamming, getting to truly experience all that Alaska has to offer. Each member of our group came home with over forty pounds of vacuum-sealed Alaska bounty.

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I got to participate in something special in June. It was a C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation event, put on for nine special needs youth anglers at Potholes State Park in Eastern Washington. The foundation, born in 1991, had its first event at Banks Lake in Washington. Today, the organization is on pace to host 100 or more fishing events all over the nation.

C.A.S.T. for Kids was founded by Jim Owens, a retired Bureau of Reclamation worker who wanted to get kids with special needs and disadvantages out for a fun, mentored day of fishing. Melissa McCalmant, who was present at the Potholes event, is the Western Operations Manager for C.A.S.T. for Kids. She said volunteers are a key part of their operation. That includes a volunteer coordinator who does the

bulk of the work putting each event together. The coordinator gets with the venue owner and, in some cases, with their state fish and wildlife agency to arrange for fish stocking. In lakes or ponds that already have well-established fish populations, this is not necessary. The coordinator also seeks cash donations to purchase rods, reels, and tackle boxes at a discounted rate from Lews and Flambeau for each participant.

McCalmant also told me they go to great lengths to get special needs kids out fishing. She recalled one instance where a parent said their child could not participate because he was in a wheelchair. McCalmant procured a volunteer with a pontoon boat that was ADA accessible so that the young man could indeed enjoy a day out on the water.

In fact, for many of the kids participating, it's their first time fishing.

Melissa went on to tell me that while many events take place with anglers fishing from shore, they also offer events where anglers will fish with volunteer boaters on bass boats or on pontoon boats.

Summing things up, McCalmant said, "This is a free event for the participant and their family, and it's a day that allows them to forget about their special needs and that they are too, just like one of us, and can fish and participate."

As for the Potholes event, Levi Rodelo, a local fishing and hunting guide with Ross Outdoor Adventures, has a special needs daughter. He took on the role of Event Coordinator.



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Nixon's Marine in Pasco, Washington, donated \$500 so he could purchase the rods, reels, and tackle boxes for each kid.

Levi coordinated with Potholes State Park and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), who both readily agreed to partner in the event. Levi obtained a net pen that he put next to the boat launch in the park. WDFW stocked the net pen with 250 rainbow trout, the majority being catchable size, but some were much larger.

On the morning of the event, 15 volunteers met Rodelo and McCalmant. They assigned roles to all of us, and then the kids showed up with their families at 8 AM. The special needs of the children varied. One teenager had high-functioning autism, and one child had Down syndrome.

Two other kids were non-verbal and couldn't speak.

Each child (and volunteer) was given a t-shirt to wear from C.A.S.T. for Kids, as well as their fishing rods, reels, and tackle box. Each kid was paired up with a volunteer fishing buddy/coach. Hooks were baited under bobbers, and it was time to go fishing!

The fishing wasn't fast and furious, but everybody got to reel in one or more trout in two hours of shore fishing. With the temperature heating up, the fishing wrapped up around 10 AM.

After that, everyone involved went to a food truck brought there by Blacky's Smokin Sweet from Othello. The owners heard about the event and wanted to participate.





They refused all payment, accepted no tips, and served everyone their choice of hamburger or hot dog with fries.

The event wrapped up with every kid getting a picture with their fishing buddy, and every coach and participant received a plaque to commemorate the event. The kids absolutely loved the whole thing. Not just fishing, but being made to feel like they were the center of attention, doing something very fun.

If you want to find out more about the C.A.S.T. for Kids non-profit Foundation, go to [www.castforkids.org](http://www.castforkids.org). Once there, you can look for events near you and sign up your special needs kid. If you want to volunteer or donate, you can do that through the website as well. C.A.S.T. for Kids...They are doing some great things for some very special kids out there.

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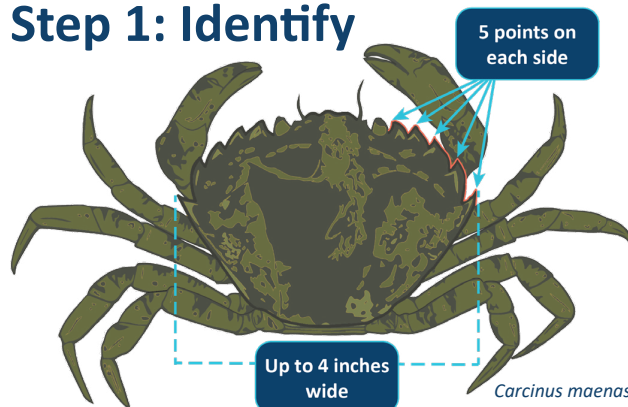


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The European green crab is a damaging invasive species that poses a threat to native shellfish and habitat for salmon and many other species. They are not always green and may be orange, red or yellow. These shore crabs are found in less than 25 feet of water often in estuaries, mudflats, and intertidal zones. They are not likely to be caught in deeper water, but may be encountered by beach anglers, waders, clam and oyster harvesters, or those crabbing off docks or piers in shallow areas. **As a Prohibited species, it is illegal to possess or transport live European green crabs in Washington.** Shellfish growers and private tidelands owners in areas with European green crabs should contact WDFW for management support or permits. Please email [ais@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:ais@dfw.wa.gov).

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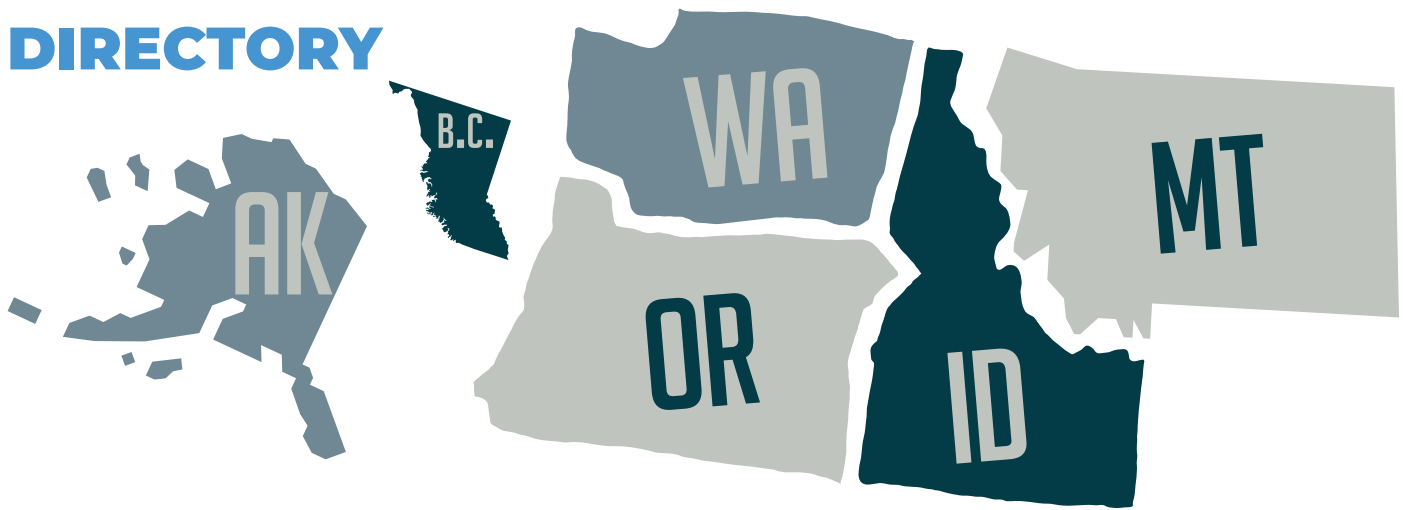


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