

REEL LIFE

COVER STORY

Columbia River's September Upriver Brights

Page 19

Hiking for Trout

Page 16

Late Summer
Smallmouth Bass
Strategies

Page 24

10 Kokanee Tips

Page 30

FREE



Not just a **base layer.**

GHUnders is years of
thought and perfection;
Base layers that are tough
and lasts you years
beyond any other; a base
layer that works as hard
as you do.

GHUNDERS *Performance*
BASE LAYERS
—GHUNDERS.COM—

ghunders.com



THE **GET OUTDOORS** PACKAGE



What's in the Get Outdoors Package?

- Freshwater license
- Saltwater license
- Shellfish & seaweed license
- Two-pole endorsement
- Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement
- Deer license & tag*
- Elk license & tag*
- Cougar license & tag
- Bear license & tag
- Small game license
- Migratory bird authorization**
- Migratory bird permit
- Turkey tag 1
- Turkey tag 2
- Vehicle access pass

ALL FOR \$236.18!

**What's the catch?
You just need to get outdoors. #GO**

Visit mywdfw.com to purchase

*Deer and Elk tags require a weapon type selection and may be obtained at the time of purchase or at a later date.

**Sea Duck, Brant, Band Tailed Pigeon, Snow Goose, and SW Canada Goose Harvest Report Cards will not be available until April. A fifty cent dealer fee will be charged per report card.

EDITOR'S CORNER:

September is a magical time here in the Pacific Northwest. The number of fisheries and options for an angler are truly staggering. Everything just seems to come together in a perfect blend of summer turning into fall.

As this issue hits the stands pink salmon have streamed into the Sound and are now filling the rivers. This odd-year salmon has its share of detractors but for pure fun a day of catch and release pinks on a river can't be beat! Of course, you could stay out on the salt and target coho...or, if you're looking to hook into something bigger check out this month's article on Hanford fall chinook. If you don't have a boat of your own this one is worth hiring a guide for! How about fall kokanee? September finds kokanee becoming more aggressive as they prepare to spawn and some truly epic days can be had. Maybe an Alpine Lakes hike for trout is more your thing? Don't forget warm water species. Hanna Pennebaker has a crappie recipe you'll want to give a try. So many options – get out there and enjoy!

Mike Carey - mike@northwestfishingreports.com



CONTENTS

FOLLOW US:

www.northwestfishingreports.com

[f](#) [@](#) [@northwestfishingreports.com](#)



07 Hot Reports
Mike Carey

16 Hiking for Trout
John Kruse

28 Tempura Breaded Crappie
Hanna Pennebaker

09 Crappie Crackdown
Hannah Pennebaker

19 Columbia River's September Upriver Bright's
Jason Brooks

30 10 Kokanee Tips
Randy Castello

12 Hanford Reach Chinook
Mike Carey

24 Late Summer Smallmouth Bass Strategies
Rick Lawrence

34 Toothy Monsters
Paul Lewis

CELEBRATE A LIFE LIVED OUTDOORS

#LIFEOUTDOORSWA



LIFE
OUTDOORS

**VISIT WDFW.WA.GOV/LIFE-OUTDOORS
FOR MORE INFORMATION**



**CATCH THE
LATEST FRESH
FISHING
REPORTS,
ARTICLES
& VIDEOS**



**CATCH US ONLINE
WWW.NWFRTV.COM**



NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

A Digital Anglers LLC & Northwest Fishing Reports Publication

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Carey

PUBLISHER

Rob Holman

CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Brooks

Randy Castello

Hillary Holman

John Kruse

Rick Lawrence

Paul Lewis

Hannah Pennebaker

TEAM NWFR (NWFRTV)

Robby Sy

Hillary Holman

Noah Bettin

Paul Hamilton

Mark Nordahl

Luke Hatfield

Barry Dubnow

John Guarisco

ARTICLE SUBMISSION INQUIRIES

mike@northwestfishingreports.com

PUBLISHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VICTORY MEDIA

govictory.agency

CREATIVE DIRECTOR/ LEAD GRAPHICS

Mary Lefkowski

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Mary Lefkowski

ADVERTISING

rob@northwestfishingreports.com

ACCOUNTING

Julia Wentz



Northwest Fishing Reports
PO BOX 3584
Redmond WA 98073-3582

HOT REPORTS FROM NORTHWESTFISHINGREPORTS.COM

By: Mike Carey

The focus this past month from our readers has been salmon, first with what seems to be shaping up as a pretty good chinook year in the Sound, and then the arrival of pink salmon in ever-increasing numbers. It's looking like we should have a good season for salmon (so far). Here are some of the reports that stood out this month (there are plenty more to be read at northwestfishingreports.com).



A beautiful day and fish at Ilwaco.

AREA 1

Fishing report out of Ilwaco from NWFR member Se@hawk reported they had to work hard but got their limits. Anchovies were the bait of choice and mooching was what got them the fish. [CLICK HERE](#)



A nice near limit of jumbo trout from Mayfield Lake.

MAYFIELD JUMBO TROUT

Mayfield Lake is producing nice catches of jumbo trout as reported by NWFR member BobbersDown88. "Fish were shallow, I only let out 24 feet on the line counter so we were fishing the top of the water column." Dodgers and mini shrimp spinners tipped with corn were the ticket. This time of year can be great for trout as they've had a chance to get big over the summer, plus the lakes have less pressure as more anglers target salmon. [CLICK HERE](#)

We hope that gives you some ideas for places and opportunities to go fishing in the coming month. Share your reports on Northwestfishingreports.com and show us how you do. It's free to set up an account. When you post all your reports are saved in an easy to see, searchable location that you'll be able to easily access for years to come!



Many anglers reported great success with resident coho this year.

AREA 9 Resident Coho

Longtime member rmauscher knows resident coho and he and his friend slayed them, including losing a nice chinook at the boat. Randy reports "Nothing fancy for gear. Flasher and hoochie with herring strip. Fish were 0-75 feet in the water column." [CLICK HERE](#)



Meridian kokanee are back!

MERIDIAN LAKE KOKANEE

Meridian Lake kokanee are back! After a couple years of poor reports from our members we got this encouraging report from nerka nailer. Limits for nerka nailer and his friend, the fish were in the 25-35 foot depth range using standard kokanee rigs. Pink was the hot color and they had the lake all to themselves. In addition to the report they posted a cool video on northwestfishingreports.com of the action. [CLICK HERE](#)



Whidbey Island beaches and near shore are a pink hotspot.

WHIDBY ISLAND PINKS

Shore fishing for pink salmon is a great way for anglers without boats to get in on the action and when the fish are in it can be very productive. Fishing will be peaking but there's still a chance at these fish before they head into the rivers. JoshH reports "I was casting a 2oz pink rotator with a pink skirt, letting it sink for about 5 seconds before starting a few slow retrieve with a small twitch every 2-3 reel cranks." [CLICK HERE](#)



Kokanee like these are worth putting in your time.

PRIEST LAKE BIG KOKANEE

We would be remiss if we didn't mention that Priest Lake in Idaho has some BIG kokanee in it! You have to put in the time but fish like this one caught by Conradlam can be had. He reports "Flashers with 20 inch leaders seem to do the trick. Red flies with tipped with corn helped us achieve our goal. Although we marked lots of fish in the 20 foot column we found willing takers in the 30 foot column." [CLICK HERE](#)



SUMMER FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

www.mardonresort.com

tannersfish.com

Wild caught Alaskan Seafood
delivered to your door.





CRAPPIE CRACKDOWN

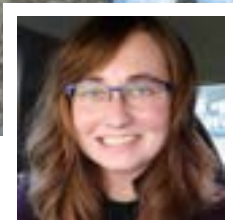
*Fishing with
the Jigmeister*



WATCH NOW



*These crappie are all
destined for the dinner table!*



by Hanna Pennebaker

It's the heat of the summer, and crappie fishing couldn't be hotter!

It's the heat of the summer, and crappie fishing couldn't be hotter! As lakes begin to heat up, crappie come close to shore from the depths of their winter hideouts. These little panfish put up a good fight for their size, and they taste great too. Unlike trout, which don't bite as well when lakes heat up, crappie are right at home in warm water. They are eager biters from sun up to sun down, so no need to rush out there. Beginner fishermen and kids alike can both have an amazing time catching bucketfuls of crappie. Most specimens are between 8 to 11 inches, just the right size for your frying pan

(hence the name "panfish"). They can be eaten whole or filleted quickly. Their meat is surprisingly firm, but flavorful and flaky. Let's dive into some techniques and tactics so that you and your family can have a crappie fish fry this summer!

Techniques

By and large, jigging is the most popular technique to catch crappie. Crappie jigs come in a variety of sizes, from tiny 1/64 oz jigs to larger 1/8 oz lead. It's all about what depth the fish are holding at. In the summer, the fish are usually near the bottom. In deeper lakes, you'll need a heavier jig to reach the strike zone. You can get away with using 1/64 or 1/32 oz jigs in shallow lakes, or if the fish seem shy of larger offerings. Lighter jigs take longer to sink and get into the strike zone in deeper water, but that can work in your favor if you're not sure where the fish are holding yet. Once you've located the school, you can use a slip bobber or fixed bobber to make sure your jig gets straight back to that depth.

The number one rule of crappie fishing is to vary up your retrieve. Try a slow, steady retrieve on one cast. Then, if you don't get a bite, try a faster retrieve on the next cast. Keep changing it up until you find what works. Depending on the water temperature, the fish may be lethargic and more responsive to a slower moving presentation. If the fish are actively feeding, a faster retrieve will yield strikes more often than not.

It's a good idea to bring a wide selection of jigs, for two reasons. One, you

might snag up or break off your line. Two, you never know what offering the crappie will key in on that day. Generally, you'll want to have several different colors of tubes and curly tail grubs, in a variety of weights.

As for your rod and reel, you'll want either an ultralight or light action setup. Crappie jigs are usually 1/8 oz or less, and a heavy pole just won't cast them well. Light braid or monofilament work just fine. I like ultralight setups because I can detect bites and snags more easily. Sensitivity is the key!

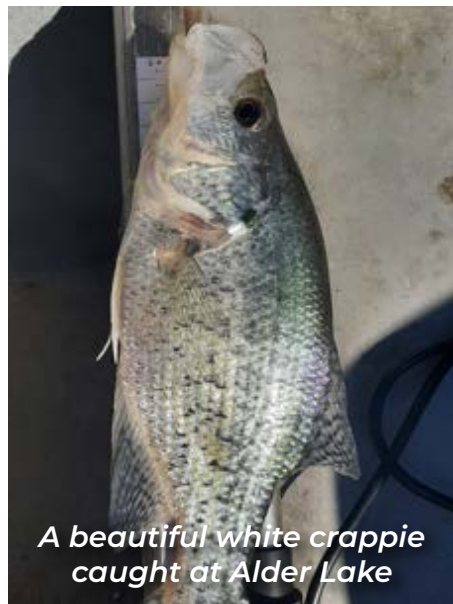


This crappie was caught on a white curlytail grub.

Locations

So you're at your favorite lake and you've selected the perfect crappie jig, but now you're wondering how to find the right place to target crappie. A good rule of thumb is to find structure. Search the edges of the lake for exposed trees or bushes sticking out of the water. You don't need a fancy fish finder to bring home some nice crappie, but electronics can certainly help you find the fish. Down scan and side scan features will reveal underwater structure that you might not see. Polarized sunglasses can help too! You'll probably lose a few jigs to tree branches, but keep in mind that if you're not snagging, you're not crappie fishing! Once you've landed one fish, drop right back to that same spot. Crappie are a schooling fish, so you'll likely keep catching more.

You can find crappie in most lakes around Western Washington. There is no bag or size limit on crappie, in general. However, check your regs because some lakes do impose size and creel limits. This is usually done to ensure a quality crappie population for years to come. In Western Washington, some good lakes to start with include Black Lake, Harts Lake, and Tanwax Lake. These are all lakes with healthy populations of good size fish. Some lakes have white crappie, others have black crappie. White crappie have more narrow, light colored



A beautiful white crappie caught at Alder Lake

bodies. Black crappie have striking green and black scales. Both types taste great on the frying pan!

Now is the perfect time to try your hand at crappie fishing. I highly recommend bleeding and icing your catch right away for the best meat quality. A word of caution for kids and beginner fishermen: crappie have sharp spines on their dorsal and anal fins. The best way to hold crappie is by grabbing their lower jaw with your fingertips, if you intend to keep them. If you're going to release them, "lipping" them like this can hurt their chances of survival, so it's best to wet your hands first and hold them gently in your hands. Lay the spines back as you hold on to the fish to prevent being stuck. With that being said, crappie fishing is a great way to introduce kids and fishermen of all ages to the sport. Crappie jigs are cheap, and the fish are eager biters. So go out there and catch a bunch of crappie!

Born out of an interest in the local food movement and the love of a great drink.



**SKIP ROCK
DISTILLERS**
SNOHOMISH, WA



Idaho, Oregon & Washington Fishing Outfitter

**Specializing in guided fishing for Steelhead,
Salmon, White Sturgeon, Smallmouth Bass,
Walleye, and Kokanee.**

(208) 790-2128 reeltimefishing.com

Fall Chinook on Hanford
Reach Extended



WATCH NOW



HANFORD REACH CHINOOK



A days catch and some good eating ahead!

by Mike Carey

My reel was peeling line at a dizzying rate and it felt like I had a freight train attached on the other end. Without thinking I applied my thumb to the level line spool and pulled back with a loud “ouch!” “That’ll leave a mark” our guide Dave deadpanned. The fish was a good fifty yards behind our boat before I was able to slowly start to regain line. Foot by foot the strong chinook and I battled back and forth, each of us gaining, and then losing line to the other.

Closer and closer the powerful fish came, each run a little less intense. Now a giant tail could be seen, trailing a large V wake

behind it. Finally, the fish, exhausted came to the side of the boat and I saw the reassuring sign of fatigue as the fish laid on its side, telling us we were getting closer to that critical moment. Net sliding under the fish Dave skillfully scooped him up and into our boat. But not before the big fish gave one final flip of his tail, giving all of us an early morning soaking. Wow! This upriver fall bright was twenty plus pounds of pure power and beauty, not to mention great eating. The smiles and high fives of my friends were the icing on the cake and the day was just beginning! A perfect morning, the sun just breaking over the shoreline and catching a hot Hanford Reach fall chinook - it’s the stuff dreams are made of, and it was living up to be everything I had heard about the Reach.

Washington’s Hanford Reach is synonymous with some of the state’s best fall chinook fishing to be found – and not coincidentally, the last of the chinook fishing to be found for the season. It’s the icing on the cake, and what icing it is! The Reach is the perfect setting and the perfect fish to end the year’s salmon fishing on the Columbia River. These are the brutes that dreams are made of. A fish worth dreaming about during the long off season and savoring the brief weeks they are available to catch. Battle plans must be made, so let’s talk about what you need to know to

get into this fishery and have a chance at one of these amazing fish. They call “The Reach” the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia. With dams seemingly from one end of the Columbia to the other, this stretch of water has no dams to impede it. Here, from Priest Rapids dam down to Richland anglers have 63 miles of productive water to fish. Ideal spawning grounds make this a natural holding location for big chinook to do their reproducing thing. For the boat angler, you’ll find a variety of deep holes, shallow runs, and everything in between. A prop boat can be used – with extreme caution, however, downriver in the area known as Coyote Rapids a jet is the way to go.

The most popular location anglers congregate is Vernita Bridge. There is a large open area to the north of the bridge on the east side of the river. Every year a small town of anglers set up their base camp here. All variety of tents, RVs, and sleeping in the back of trucks can be seen. At night the cries of the coyotes remind you that this is wild country. Camping is free, but a Discovery pass is required. The launch here is rough and rocky and four-wheel drive is a must. Plan on your boat getting scraped up on the rocky shoreline and be sure to bring waders to help during the launch and retrieval process. Launching, by the way,



starts at o-dark hundred. Alarm clocks are optional – unless you’re a deep sleeper, you will be awakened by the lights and sounds of anglers starting to launch around 3am. Just upstream from the rough launch at Vernita you’ll run into the first hole, the Hog Hole. This spot will hold fish early and throughout the season. It’s in the middle of the river and runs a couple hundred yards in length and has a depth of 15-40 feet. Fish will be both suspended and hugging the bottom here. The hole is deep enough to require a way to get your gear down to the fish. This can include divers, dropper weights, and, yes, downriggers. A word of caution – the Columbia is a big, strong, and powerful river. Snagging a downrigger ball on the bottom of the Columbia has the potential for some seriously bad consequences and requires the boat captain and crew to be ready to deal with them. The times I’ve used downriggers I always have a wire cutter at the ready and a good dose of “always pay attention” to go along with it. It goes without saying if another boat hooks up to be ready to pull those riggers up. Backtrolling this hole works well and as you push the fish ever shallower be ready for that take down.

A variety of salmon catching gear can be used for Hanford chinook depending on the depth and speed of the spot you are fishing. Among the most popular setups are flashers with super baits (packed with tuna), plugs, flatfish (wrapped with a sardine or herring strip), and the ever-effective spin-n-glo with eggs, or eggs and shrimp. Anglers that are flexible and willing to adapt techniques to river flow and time of day will be most successful. Backtrolling your gear down the hole can be very effective, pushing fish back down the hole and triggering them to bite out of aggression is a tried-and-true technique.

Farther upriver as you head toward the dam, you’ll find the King Hole about a mile and a half above the bridge, then the China Bar and Midway Drifts. One of my personal favorite spots is the deep hole just down from the dam. As well as being great holding water, it’s a stunningly beautiful spot.



A beautiful foggy morning on the Reach.

The deep hole off the rocks is great for downrigger fishing. You may even want to try running a diver twenty feet behind your release and bringing the ball up ten feet off the bottom, letting the diver do the work of bring your bait down to the bottom. Be sure to pay attention to the regulations and know the areas that are closed, downriver from the dam and on the west shoreline where the hatchery is located.

Below the Vernita Bridge you will find several more popular spots, including those famous old reactors. It's about a three-mile run down to the B/C hole, and another four miles to reactor number one, and then number two. Beyond a large bend you'll find the famous White Bluffs with a nice sixty-foot-deep hole. There's a concrete launch located here, however; this is the area where running a prop boat becomes a dicey proposition. Be mindful that water levels can go up and down five to six feet in a day, leaving riffles where clear passage had been. It would be best to learn this water by first going with a guide before venturing out on your own. Finally, farther downstream around the areas of the mouth of the Yakima down to the mouth of the Snake you'll find slower water, more suited for prop boats. With several launches located around Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick, smaller boats will have a safer time of it than at the fast-flowing upper Reach spots.

As to timing, these up-river brights can be targeted from mid-September well into late October. Don't be fooled by the dark coloring on these fish – they cut just fine and taste great! The Reach is truly an amazing place to fish with the very real opportunity of hooking into large chinook. Multi-fish days are not unusual. As a bonus, while fishing you'll be treated to amazing scenery. Besides moth-balled nuclear reactors, it's very possible to see coyote, mule deer, several varieties of waterfowl, and even herds of elk on the shoreline. Some of the

best weather in the Pacific Northwest can be had with temperatures moderating from the scorching hot summer days. You'll find cool nights and a sky full of stars to gaze at as the coyotes sing you to sleep. And most likely you'll be rewarded with some tasty chinook to take home.



Mark Nordahl with a beauty.



The author with a brute of a fall chinook

Ross Outdoor Adventures

Central Washington's Premier Guide Service

BOOK ONLINE
rossoutdooradventures.com



oldgoatlures.com

Designed and manufactured lures for
salmon, kokanee, trout, and walleye.



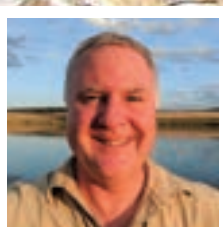
OLD GOAT LURES™

Visiting Pete Lake
for Trout



HIKING FOR TROUT

Small mountain streams mean bonus trout



by John Kruse

www.northwesternoutdoors.com + www.americaoutdoorsradio.com

With the snow melted in the mountains it's the perfect time to lace up your hiking boots and hit the trail with a rod in hand to target trout. Offering lightly pressured waters and a good way to cool off during the dog days of summer, fishing alpine lakes and forested streams can be very rewarding.

Starting with mountain lakes there are several things you can do that will help you catch trout to include:

1. Avoid fishing the first beach or lake access point

where the trail meets the lake. This is the one place that often sees significant fishing pressure, not to mention hikers and their dogs who might want to go swimming here after a long hike on a hot summer day.

2. Fish the area around the outlet and inlet of the lake, this is where trout often congregate because there is lots of food for them in these areas.

3. Use a spinning rod rigged up with a castable, clear (water-filled) bobber and a fly behind a 3-foot leader. Dry flies, nymphs and streamers will all work. Most of the time the trout are in deeper water, too far from shore for most anglers with fly rods to cast to.

4. Use weighted spinners or spoons. A lot of spinners and lures aren't heavy enough or built well for casting far, especially on a breezy day. Aerodynamic spinners I like to use include the Mack's Lure Promise Keeper spinner (1/8 oz) and the Worden's Rooster Tail spinner (1/6 oz). When it comes to spoons, I'm a big fan of DarDevle spoons (especially the classic red and white one) and the Acme Kastmaster (blue and chrome is a go to pattern for alpine lakes fishing).

5. Avoid using bait. These lakes are pristine and beautiful places. Nobody wants to see PowerBait stains on rocks or empty Styrofoam worm cartons floating around the lake. Besides, artificial lures work just fine and are much better to use if you are releasing the trout you catch. If you really want to make sure those trout are released unharmed, use lures modified with pliers to have one or two barbless hooks instead of a barbed treble hook.

6. Consider using a float tube to really get out deep where many of the fish are found. Wilderness Lite is a company specializing in packable, ultra-lightweight float tubes and fins that together weigh less than five pounds. The float tubes are easily inflated once you reach the lake. Check out their product line at www.wildernesslitefloattubes.com

Mountain trout fishing doesn't just apply to lakes, streams are worth fishing too. Many trails follow creeks and small rivers and if you are willing to go just a short way off-trail you'll often find great pools and runs that hold plenty of trout. The trout are generally not huge in these waters, but they can be plentiful. I will often use a short ultra-lite spinning rod (5 ½ to 6 feet long) spooled with 4 to 6-pound line. Small spinners work very well in these situations. #0 or #1 Mepps spinners with chrome, brass, and copper blades as well as Mepps Black Fury spinners are all very effective.



A brook trout caught in a small mountain stream

I will generally fish the bright chrome spinners in low light or murky water conditions. I'll fish the copper and black bladed spinners when the sun is bright on the water. The gold or brass blades? Consider that a great all-round choice!

These small streams are also perfect for fly fishing. Take a light 3 weight rod with floating line and work the pools you'll find in these creeks and rivers. Two of my favorite dry flies for these waters are a Parachute Adams or Royal Wulff, the latter being a favorite for cutthroat trout in particular. During the late summer there's no need to bring waders, just take off those hiking boots, slip on a pair of sandals and enjoy a walk and wade day of fishing. The feel of the cold water on your legs on a hot summer day is half the fun of fishing these waters.



WORK SHARP® SHARPENERS

THE KNIFE SHARPENING COMPANY

INTRODUCING THE **KNIFE & TOOL SHARPENER Mk.2**

Experience shaving sharp edges on all your knives. The **KNIFE & TOOL SHARPENER Mk.2** is easy to use and delivers best-in-class sharpening for all knives and edged tools. Sharper than the day you bought them.



SCAN TO WATCH
THE VIDEO 

Learn more at:

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/D614F5FT](https://tinyurl.com/D614F5FT)



Hell Razor™

SWARM

Switchblade Flasher System

wigglesfin.com



WATCH NOW



Columbia River's September Upriver Brights



**Close quarters – combat
fishing on the Columbia!**



by Jason Brooks

The morning sky was getting light enough to tell itself from the distant mountains as we backed the boat down the ramp. Once we launched it was full throttle ahead as we crossed the Columbia to the mouth of the tributary river dumping in cooler water. Salmon making their way up the Columbia often dive into the cooler waters of tributaries or where that water mixes with the warmer water of the big river. Just

about every tributary above Bonneville Dam offers a place for fish to rest and be caught. Be sure to check the regulations for each part of the river and the

deadlines, or areas that mark which river you are actually in and which rules pertain.

Rivers also change from year to year. One of the best fisheries back in the early 2000's was near White Salmon before they removed the dam. For the next few years after the dam removed the sediment made it impossible to fish, and is such like that each year with each spot to fish, it is a river, ever changing. So be sure to not only read the regulations but also read the river and be careful until you know where the channels have shifted too. Here is more info on where to find September's Upriver Bright's and how to catch them.

Early morning often means trolling plugs such as MagLip 4.5's, Brad's Killer Fish K14's and Luhr-Jensen Kwikfish K14's. Popular colors are ones that glow in the dark and be sure to illuminate them with a quick flash from a cameral flash or intense flashlight. One trick is to take a coffee can and cut an "X" in the lid allowing you to put the plug inside with the flash and then hit it with the light which bounces off of the can to hit all sides of the plug as well as it won't blind you so you can still see if you are about to run into another boat. The plugs should be pre-wrapped with a sardine fillet and a 4-ounce



"Hover Fishing" – best to hire a guide unless you can handle this kind of boat traffic

dropper attached to a swivel 3 feet in-front of 30-pound leader. Drop it down to the bottom and then reel up a couple of cranks. Keep an eye on the fish finder and if you see suspended fish then raise a plug or two up to their depth.

Herb Good is legendary in the fishing world and perfected the technique of "hover fishing". One of my very first times ever trying this technique was while fishing with Herb. He gave us a quick Hover Fishing 101 class explaining that the Chinook will be stacked up in deep slots along the bottom cooling off in the water coming from the Big Columbia's tributary. The idea was to keep the bait in their faces long enough that they grab onto it. Herb explained how the Chinook will just grab the bait in their mouth and hold it. As the boat drifted in the current we would see the rod tip slowly drop. He explained the key was to hold the rod in your hands and keep the rod tip 6 inches from the water at all times. The rods were just over 7 feet long, with a stout back and a fast action tip. This allowed the rod tip to bend as the fish held the bait in their mouth as we moved away. Once the rod tip hit the water surface we put the backbone of the rod to use and set the hook much like you would if you were jigging. He gave us a reminder to keep the weight two cranks off of the bottom and check it often. This kept the bait in the zone of resting fish.

For Hover Fishing put on 2-ounce weights with 3 foot leaders of 20-pound mono tied to a size 2 hook. Drop it down to the bottom and once it hits reel it up two cranks. Then hold on and wait for the bite. The bite will be a slow pull, not a violent strike, and if you feel a small "tap, tap, tap" then that is likely peamouth. A Chinook will be even more subtle than the 10

inch peamouth. When you do feel that slow pull down be sure to set the hook hard to drive the small hook into the roof of the mouth of the chinook. What can make a big difference in hover fishing is the eggs. A few years ago we had been fishing all day with a few bites and then I sprinkled on some Pro-Cure Slam-Ola powder and got bit immediately. Testing the theory everyone who sprinkled on the powder got bit and those who didn't use the additive didn't get bit. Be sure to take along different cured eggs and some with additives such as Pro-Cure's Monster Bite or powdered Tuna. These fish have eggs suspended in their face all day long. The difference can be as simple as an additive, color, or cure type.

Where to fish: The Upriver Bright prediction for 2021 is 345,200 which is nearly 55,000 more fish than what actually returned last year. This means it should be really good fishing throughout the month of September. Stay low early in the month and work your way upriver just as the fish do later in the month.

Drano is a summer steelhead producer and it's not uncommon to catch a Chinook when bobber fishing prawns or eggs. As the summer turns to fall head back to the infamous "toilet bowl" area near the highway 14 bridge that is so popular for Spring Chinook and hover fish once you start marking Upriver Bright's that have pulled in to rest in the cool water. Of course if you could hover fish for springer's here you would clean up, but as etiquette goes, there is no way you can sit in one place anywhere near the highway 14 bridge during the spring Chinook fishery. However, the one tactic that has become extremely popular is to slowly troll prawn rigs with a dropper weight. This is essentially hover fishing but because you can't stay put you keep you motor in gear and go as slow as you can keeping your offering in front of suspended fish for as long as you can. For fall fish give the prawn rigs a try as well as suspending bait. Of course you can never go wrong with pulling wrapped plugs no matter what time of year you target Chinook.



*The classic –
a wrapped kwickfish*

The Klickitat River is a "go to" destination river when it comes to fall chinook fishing. Here you can fish in the deadline area at the mouth where it dumps into the Columbia or you can make your way into the actual river channel and the steep canyon walls where you can catch fish in the calm waters out of the wind. Be sure to use caution when trying to motor up into the river as the sandbars change almost daily here, especially with fall rains and if it is windy then remember you still need to cross the big Columbia to get back to the launch. Small boats should not try this fishery or if you do then pay attention to the wind as it can become deadly very quick.

Most fish out in the deadline area and the boats near the channel marker will be hover fishing. Here when you find a school of resting chinook doubles, triples, and even then entire boat getting bit all at once is common. It can also be "slow" as the fish can be just about anywhere on the large sand flat, looking for the cool water. A depression in the sand a foot or two is all it takes for the colder water to settle and that is where the fish will be.

Another way to fish this
September 2021 | 21



Hover fishing can be deadly effective – once you get the technique down

area is to troll just outside of the hover fisherman. Pulling the wrapped plugs works very well and some will also pull 360-flashers with a plug cut herring or a Brad's SuperBait or a Yakima Bait Company Spinfish, both stuffed with tuna fish and some Pro-Cure Bloody Tuna bait oil. Troll along the edge of the sandbar, and look for suspended fish on the sonar.

Some anglers will troll in either direction while others will find trolling upriver tends to get more bites as the fish are facing upriver and as the gear passes them it incites them to chase and bite.

The Deschutes River dumps into the Columbia a few miles upriver of The Dalles, Oregon. Here you will find steelhead anglers heading to this "blue ribbon" river where no fishing from a boat is allowed and a special permit is needed to float it. But the salmon anglers will be concentrating in the Columbia, again in a deadline fishery, where they stack up just like the chinook. Hover fishing here is the main technique and expect a lot of company. Finding the fish is as simple as finding the river channel, but staying on top of the fish is almost impossible to do with so many boats in the area.

Each year it seems the regulations change but there are some great fisheries below and even right above the dams on the Columbia. Up until McNary Dam either a Washington or Oregon fishing license allows you to fish in the Columbia river itself, but remember if you go up into a river, such as the Klickitat you will need the appropriate state license. At each of the dams there is often a terminal fishery, where you can intercept the fish that are stacked up to go over the fish ladder. Each of these

can be great places to fish but be careful of water being flushed downriver.

One of the most popular places to fish for fall upriver bright chinook is the famed Hanford Reach. This is the last free flowing stretch of the Columbia River with a salmon run. The Hanford Reach, just north of the tri-cities is also a spawning grounds for the large strain of upriver bright's. Here you can catch a fish in the upper 40-pound mark with a few reaching into the 50's and even top 60-pounds. At the turn of the 20th century fish of this size was common but over time the strain has been diminished. Now only the Hanford Reach puts out fish like this, as they use the large gravel and free flowing waters to spawn in. Vernita is the main launch location and can become very busy during the height of the fishery. Strong currents are the norm here and you better be able to fish safely in them, otherwise hiring a guide is recommended.

The upriver bright chinook is one of the most sought after fish in the Pacific Northwest. Fresh and full of oils they are comparable to spring chinook but their size is much larger. Hatchery fish are often in the mid-teens to upper twenty-pound range and if you are lucky you might hook into one of the Hanford Reach kings. Fall mornings are often best spent on the Columbia River chasing chinook.



The Northwest's Premier Outfitter offering guided fishing trips in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

f | @ Jones Sport Fishing



Precisionpropco.com

Your trusted boat propeller shop since 1962.





Late Summer Smallmouth Bass Strategies

Smallmouth Bass on the John Day



by Rick Lawrence



One of my favorite times of the year is late summer to early fall fishing for Smallmouth on the Pend Oreille River here in North Idaho. Over the past 10 years I have acquired a few new techniques that have greatly improved my catch rates. One of those new methods got me a 94 fish day on the river a few days ago, so I thought I would share some of my somewhat secret techniques I have learned over the years to catch river Smallies.

First off let me say I love catching Bronzebacks on topwater gear and do it as much as I can. You can't beat fishing a good popper in the early morning hours for the old Riverturds for

some amazing strikes. However two other somewhat finesse methods have proven to be the way to really put the numbers in the boat. Those are the Dropshot and the Ned Rig. I have however modified both of these with slight tweaks that just seem to make them work better for me.

First I will cover the Drop Shot;

I use a few different methods when Dropshotting, one is my drag the Dropshot technique I developed about 15 years ago where I tie on a Walleye bottom bouncer type weight I make without the top wire hooked to it and use a piece of hollow core pencil lead as the weight for my Dropshot rig. I bend the wire on the bottom, so it will slide over the rocks without getting hung up. I use just enough pencil lead to keep the weight on the bottom and put my bait about 12" to 18" above the weight. Then I just let the boat drift with the current as I fish this rig straight under the boat with just enough line out for the weight to drag over the rocks. I like to drop shot a craw imitation bait for this mostly, but other minnow type baits work good as well. I use 3 different rigging methods as shown in the picture, and a variety of baits on my Dropshot. The 3 rigs use different typed of hooks and I use them under different conditions and with different baits. If I'm

fishing areas that have a lot of logs and wood on the bottom I use a EWG worm hook and Texas rig my baits. This will not stop you from getting hung up but it sure helps. If I'm fishing pretty open stretch of river without many hang-ups I use a finesse or circle hook and just nose hook the baits. One of my favorite ways to rig however is to chin-hook the bait. Where you put the hook into the bottom of the bait about where the gills would be and have the point of the hook right at the nose of the bait, but not showing. This makes the bait a little more snag resistant and improves my hookups a little, but mainly it gives the bait a little more action. My bait of choice lately is to Dropshot 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ or 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch swimbaits. This Drop-swing technique has been deadly for me the last few years in the late summer. I sometimes fish this on the drag - the Dropshot setup in a pole holder while I fish another rod with a different type of lure with my 2 pole permit here in Idaho doubling my odds. My other way I like to fish a Dropshot mainly in deeper water is a lift and drop technique with the Drop-swing. I nose rig a swimbait on a regular dropshot with a normal dropshot weight. The basic idea is to let the bait fall to the bottom then lift it up about 3 feet and let it fall again. For some reason Smallies really like hitting a falling bait and will nail it on the fall, but will totally ignore the bait once it hits bottom and is no



A beautiful late summer smallmouth (released)

longer moving. I will say that fishing these small swimbaits for Smallies can get expensive, as they can throw it off the hook in a heartbeat and off it goes to the bottom of the river.

The other technique I want to talk about here is the Ned rig. I have no clue why this stupid little jig worm thing catches fish and I even laughed at it when it first came out, but I'm not laughing anymore! The thing just puts fish in the boat and I don't really understand why, and at this point I don't care, I just fish it! LOL This little Turd Worm thing will catch fish when nothing else will. The important thing about the bait is the floating Elaztech plastic that makes the bait stand up off the bottom. This rig works with a drag technique or hopping it up off the bottom like I do my swimbaits on the dropshot. Lift the bait up a few feet and let it fall, the next time you lift if you feel weight, set the hook! I must say that although I use the Z-man baits their jig heads are not very good. The hooks have too light of wire and bend super easy. I'm still looking for a good Ned head jig that doesn't cost an arm and a leg. I have also been looking for a snag proof Ned rig hook as I fish a lot of heavy cover with a lot of logs in the water and a standard rig Ned head is history on the first cast. Owner makes a good one, but they are a little hard to find and at about a buck 50 each, a little pricey for me. I do fish the EWG hook shown in the pictures but it's not really a Ned head. I guess I will ended up having to making a mold I can put my 1/0 Gammy EWG hooks in with a stainless steel wire eye weight insert and pouring them myself. One way I have gotten around not being able to find the right hook is to fish the bait upside down with a EWG hook and a nail weight as a backwards Ned rig. This works very well in areas that have a lot of hang-ups. The Turd Worm AKA Ned rig is however my go-to bait when the fishing gets tough and I know it will just about always bring to fish in the boat for me and it will for you too.

Your thirst will be well taken care of as well as your appetite.



THE CRAZY CRAB PLACE

Good Eats in the NW

by Hillary Holman

Hey Everybody! It's me, Hillary again with another NW Good Eats. This month we move on up the Columbia to Tri Cities Washington. Many of you have driven through these towns making your way to the Coast, Hanford Reach or The Dalles. Kennewick is where this joint is. Kennewick is a usual stop for Rob and I to stretch our legs and grab supplies. It puts to bed the first leg of the trip and it is the last stop on the way home. We like to hit this place on the way back. Mainly due to the fact that Rob and I enjoy The Crazy Feast for 2.

Living in Eastern Washington, we don't get a lot of opportunities to enjoy fresh crab. When we do, we like to take our time, so plan accordingly with this in mind. Gorging oneself on crab, beer and Micheladas is no stranger here. For some of us fisherman, it is a ritual. After a fishing trip, this is the place to go to enjoy a vat of seafood and great company.

Here at The Crazy Crab Place you will find good Dungeness crab, great drinks and huge mugs of beer with an Eastern Washington twist on a Louisiana Crab Boil. Their spices are unique and delicious. It is not anything I am familiar with from Gig Harbor

to Spokane (just a little garlic butter for me), but it's great! The Michelada too is a powerhouse of flavor. A Michelada is a Mexican drink made with beer, lime juice, assorted sauces, spices, tomato juice, and chili peppers. It is a popular drink here and comes with shrimp in tow. It is marvelous! Now for the shared plates- The Crazy Feasts are a delight for any fisherman, family or couple. The feast gets served in a large crab pot and poured out onto a serving platter. The feast comes with snow crab shrimp, Dungeness crab, mussels, sausage, corn on the cob, potatoes, and a rice bowl. No substitutes! Be sure



to give their dipping sauces a try! They have a Mexican Louisiana fusion that is Crazy Good.

Did I mention the bib?
Oh yes, the crab bib. It is such a joy to watch your fellow fisherman tie a little bib round their neck. Buckle up butter cup, It's gonna be a Crazy Ride!

"Mike from Salt to Summit guide service, took us here. We had such a great time with him and his gal Katie. I will always remember eating and laughing together."

-Rob Holman

"We had been out on the water

daughter Cameron and WE GOT SKUNKED. Mike had given it everything he had. It just wasn't in the cards for the day. So afterwards Mike invited us to a little place he knew. I got to meet his lovely lady, whom he thought I'd so greatly get along with. Boy was he right. She was a dig in kind of lady and we set forth to grabbing corn and crab from the platter and toasting like gals of fisherman only know how to do."

-Hillary Holman



Rob Holman sporting a bib and a content grin.

@thecrazycrabplace

The Crazy Crab Place is a Place where memories are made and shared!

*In loving memory of
Mike Salazar*

Where: The Crazy Crab Place
Region: SE Washington
Hwy: 395

131 Vista Way,
Kennewick, WA 99336

(509) 396-9312



**HOME OF THE
WEDDING RING®
& SMILE BLADE®**

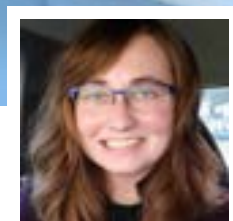


**Fishing's best
kept secret**

**Shop online at
www.mackslure.com**



Tempura Breaded Crappie



by Hanna Pennebaker

Crappie are truly the classic summer panfish. Whether you fry them whole or fillet them first, their tender white meat is always a summer highlight. They have large, thick bones that are easy to remove from fillets, or if you want to cook them whole, you can pull the meat off the bones once they're cooked. One you locate the school, crappie bite eagerly and it's easy to catch enough to get a fish fry going for the whole family.

This recipe is my favorite way to cook crappie because they always turn out crispy and moist, and it utilizes ingredients that most busy families already have around the house. Feel free to dip the fish in your favorite sauce, or enjoy on a bun for a fish sandwich that can't be beat.

TEMPURA BREADED CRAPPIE

Ingredients

1 large egg
1 cup flour
1 T paprika
1 T salt
2 T garlic powder
1 T onion powder
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
3 T corn starch
1 cup tempura bread crumbs
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1/2 cup oil
4 whole crappie or 8 fillets



Directions

Fillet your crappie or scale, gut, and rinse them.

Combine the seasoning, corn starch, and flour in 1 bowl.

Crack the egg into a second bowl and whisk until thoroughly blended.

Pour the tempura in a sandwich bag. You can substitute with cracker crumbs or pretzel crumbs for a different twist.

Take your crappie and dunk them into the seasoned flour until they're well coated.

Dip your crappie into the egg and shake off the excess.

Place your crappie into the tempura bag and shake until completely coated. Set the crappie aside and bring your oiled pan up to medium high heat.

Once the oil shimmers, carefully fry the fish on each side for about 3 to 5 minutes until the breading turns golden brown.

Lay the fish on a paper towel to help de-grease them.

Repeat for all the fillets or whole fish you have. It's best not to crowd the pan, to ensure even browning.

Serve with toasted buns or with dipping sauce.



by Randy Castello

I mulled this over for some time and thought that I would share some of my kokanee knowledge. First kokanee eat plankton. Their gills are specifically designed to filter plankton out of the water. Of all the kokanee that I have caught in my, I won't say how many years of fishing for them. I have never found anything more than green goo (chironomids) in their stomachs. So, how does one catch them? You dazzle them, piss them off, and invade their territory or whatever it takes to get a reaction bite out of them (kind of like what I remember of dating). I know that kokanee can be caught by chumming with some concoction of feed eggs and then dropping a single salmon egg to the correct depth. But I figure the kokanee is just trying to eliminate a competitor's egg and not looking for a five-star dining experience. So how does one catch a kokanee?

By attracting them with scent, low frequency vibrations or both and then dragging some flashy or irritating hardware in front of their noses. I troll small dodgers or swing blades followed with some small spinning, oscillating, vibrating or flashy offering. My theory is that, as the swing blade, dodger or gang-troll travels through the water they transmit low frequency vibrations or noise. The low frequency vibrations travel for long distances in the water. The dodger is like a billboard to the fish "The world's biggest plankton bloom, just 100 more tail waggles.

Curiosity gets the best of the kokanee and it heads in the direction of the noise. When it gets there all it sees is this irritant in the form of your lure. The fish is cranky now, it just swam out of its way and all it sees is your lure". Kind of like driving most of the way across the country chasing well weathered "The Thing" or "Wall Drug" billboards, getting there and finding out that the attraction and it's restrooms closed 10 minutes before you got there. That aside; the fisherman is hoping for one of two things at this point.

First is that the fish sees your lure/attractor combination as a form of competition and figures that it will eat the lure before the competition does or secondly, that it just plain pisses the fish off so he lashes out and strikes the lure. Ok so much for my views on kokanee fishing, now what?

Lead Line

Downriggers rule for kokanee fishing but I often fish lead line. My approach is a bit different with a phased setup that goes something like this: On an empty reel with the same capacity as the reel you plan to fish the lead line on, tape the end of the lead line to the spool and load 3 colors of lead line + a few feet. Cut the lead line saving the balance of the filler spool. Remove the lead core from a foot or so of the loose end of the lead line on the reel. Using a double-uni knot, tie 20# braid of your choice to the end of the stripped lead line. Then fill the spool with the 20# braid.

The PIA part; you will need 2 empty spools or a second reel the same type and size. The goal is to load the braid/lead line combo on your working reel braid first. When using the same reel or a reel with the same capacity as the reel temporarily holding the lead line/braid combo it is easy you just transfer reel to reel. Otherwise, you have to transfer to a spool, then to another empty spool and then back on to the original reel.

The reel is now loaded with 3 colors of lead line on top of the braid. Strip the lead core

out of a couple feet of the lead line. Using your favorite braid to mono (or in this case, favorite stripped lead line to mono) knot, tie on a 60' 6-12# fluorocarbon top shot. That's basically it. I use the lead line setup almost exclusively for kokanee so I just attach a small Comstock snap to the end of the fluorocarbon top shot to make changing dodgers easier. My reasoning for running only 3 colors of lead line is that at 0.8-1.4 mph 3 colors is all you need. In fact; using this approach I have snagged the bottom in 70' of water with just 3 colors of lead line, no backing in the water so just the lead line and the top-shot. Running just 3 colors of lead line with braid backing allows you to load a fair amount backing on standard bait casting reels with the bonus of reducing the extra weight of additional colors of lead line.

Leader Length

On our boat leader length varies based on the type of lure. As a general rule for spinner combinations, flies and hoochie type of lures I use a 8-10" leader. For lures that have their own action I run a 12-24" sometimes longer leader. My reasoning is that a kokanee lure needs some sort of wiggle. The short leader allows the dodger action to telegraph to the lure. The further from the dodger you get the less snap at the lure. Spoons, Brad's Cut Plugs, and plugs and similar lures will do their own dance without hindering the dodger action too much.

Lure/Attractor Color

"So what color are you using today?" I am often asked what color is the hot color for the day. I will tell people the color that worked for me on any given day but often do it with a disclaimer. In my opinion depth, water turbidity, time of day and the dodger-lure combination all have an impact on lure color. Chartreuse, pink, purple, orange are always a solid choice. Be prepared to experiment and mix things up until you figure out the color of the day. A good starting point is to use painted dodgers early on or on overcast cloudy days and metallic finishes on sunny or bright days. Kokanee in certain lakes will prefer a given color but if you cycle through the 4 colors previously noted it is likely that you will be able to dial it in. An additional thought; use interchangeable spinner clevises and a leader set up that allows you to change out spinner blades and/or Mack's Smile blades as required.

Corn

In the past people have flamed me for using corn as a kokanee bait. They say that it doesn't pass through the stomach and kills the fish. My response is that it is not the corn that kills my kokanee, it is a hot skillet! That said corn is my go-to hook bait for kokanee fishing. I make tuna corn using Steam Crisp Green Giant White Shoepeg corn. The process is simple but needs to be done in advance. First using a small strainer drain the corn in the refrigerator a few hours to overnight. Next drain a tin or

two of canned tuna saving the liquid, either water or oil pack works. Now would be a good time to make a tuna salad sandwich or two... Let the corn marinate in the tuna juice for a few hours to overnight and then drain again. The resulting "Tuna Corn" will be the base for your hook baits. You can enhance it with Garlic Slam-Ola powder, a variety of scents and even dye it as needed but plain Tuna Corn is a kokanee killer just as it is. Most of my kokanee setups are 2 hook rigs. Typically, I tip each hook with 1 kernel of corn. It is important to run the hook through the top of the kernel not the cut end. The corn will stay on the hook and milk scent better. The leftover corn can be refrozen multiple times. I usually retire it only if it is freezer burnt or mushy.

Depth

Many times, early AM kokanee are on the surface and the depth is kind of mute. We have caught many kokanee with the gear out but before I got the line clipped into the downrigger clip. That said depth can vary depending on both the time of the year and time of the day. Generally, later in the day, go deeper and as spring and summer transition into fall run deeper. That is the general rule, a better plan is to watch your meter and chase meter marks. We have caught hundreds of fish, especially kokanee chasing meter marks. With some level of accuracy, I can even call out a bite!



The Fight

So, you hooked the elusive silver bullet now what? First of all, plan on loosing as many as you hook. I know that sounds like a stretch and something must be wrong on my boat. There I agree with you, but it's not our technique it's the skipper! Our technique is solid but between drive-bys and short releases you're not going to put every fish in the box that shows interest in your offering. There are some things you can do to increase your chances of landing your slimy opponent. Although I am seriously guilty of not sharpening or replacing my kokanee lure hooks, sharp hooks will greatly increase your success rate. Also, whether fishing a lead line rig or off your downriggers use a purpose-built parabolic kokanee rod. Kokanee can be quite squirrely when hooked and a forgiving rod will help absorb any surprises. Kokanee typically go berserk when they are just out of range of the net. If they do, keep calm and let them think they are in charge. Ease up on your reeling, maybe even lower your rod tip a bit to take some of the pressure off the fish. Eventually the fish will sort of lay sideways or calm down and that is when you slide the net under the fish.

Net

Speaking about netting the fish. A little patience and

finesse will go a long way towards assuring that your kokanee makes it into the ice chest. It is best to use a long handled lightweight knotless net. Kokanee will often roll when you put them in the net. Your sharp barbed hooks will find their way into an uncoated net and can be difficult to remove so try to get the hook free from the fish as soon as you can. We dump the fish from the net directly into our kokanee ice chest.

Ice

Kokanee are very tasty creatures but more so than just about any other fish they must be taken care of as soon as possible. Immediately after catching a kokanee, it needs to be bled and iced. Our fish go from the net into the ice chest and then we cut or break the gill rakers to bleed the fish. Our ice chest, otherwise known as our kokanee-cooler has a bag or two of ice in it and a bit of water. In borrowing a cold beer trick, if it's hot out toss some rock salt on top of the ice. Science aside, the salt lowers the melting point of the ice. Adding salt makes for a much colder water/ice slurry and does a great job of cooling your fish or beer down. Use a clicker to keep track of your cold, subzero catch. No more trying to count cold slimy kokanee. Never put your kokanee on a stringer and drag it around the lake. During kokanee season the surface temperature of the lake could be 50-80 degrees. It won't take long at those temperatures to turn your prize catch into something less than edible.

Organization

A few words on organization. Although at times the rest of my life seems like it is in shambles, my kokanee catching machine and gear are organized. When kokanee fishing it is likely that you'll cycle through a lot of gear. It is helpful if you start out organized. Maybe have a divided box or folder for your flashers and dodgers. You can keep your pre-tied lures on foam noodles, foam leader boards or in sandwich bags. Try to be disciplined about putting the lures away as you cycle through them. In the end, your kokanee trip will be more pleasant and you won't have to remove a hook from your dogs' paw, kid's heinie or the webbing between your flip-flopped toes. Keeping organized will also help you cycle gear quickly as you try to keep pace with the changing conditions.

Home Lake

Lastly, although there many approaches to catching kokanee. It seems that each lake has its own secrets. Learn your home lake and the learned confidence will follow you to anywhere you decide to chase kokanee. The basics will be the same with only slight adjustments to depth, color or lure selection. Learning your home lake will help to assure that your aquatic travels are productive. To wrap this up, in reading this although hopefully you found it entertaining you will be better equipped to pursue the elusive kokanee with some level of confidence. Good luck and for an encore my next article should be a "Ten Step Program for Kokaholics".

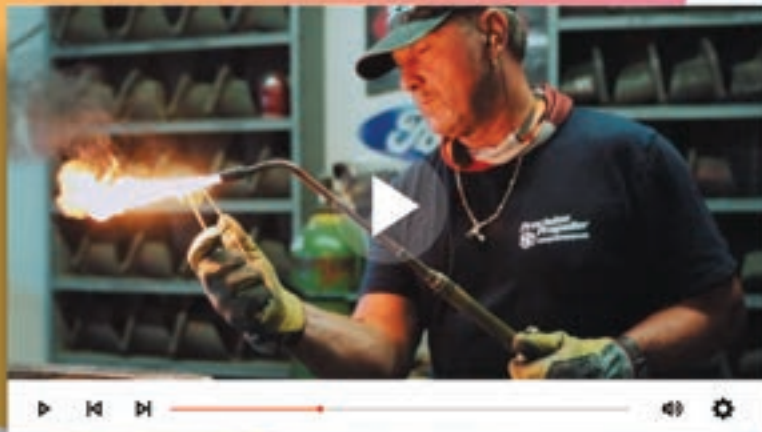
Complete Custom Marine Electronics Installations/Rigging and Electrical Service and Training. Navico, Lowrance and Simrad specialists.



We are ABYC
and NMEA Certified.

(253) 677-9400
taylormarineinstallations.com

A holistic approach to
amplifying your brand



See what we
have been up to.



Watch us!



govictory.agency

Toothy Monsters

The Atlantic Sheepshead



***The black and white
strips give this fish the
nick name "convict-fish"***



by Paul Lewis

For those who have read my recent articles, you know that when I'm not in our great PNW guiding for the myriad of species we have, I am blessed to travel the nation with my second job. Just like many of you, I travel with my rods and spend my off time exploring new and exotic species wherever I am located. In this month's travels, I was in the gorgeous Southeast chasing around some seriously vicious looking fish: The Atlantic Sheepshead.

I grew up on the lake and learned to fish targeting perch and sunfish, so every summer I get the itch to go back to my roots and chase around some big old dinner plates. At the same time,

however, I couldn't make it back home and I was in a new area, so going to a lake and picking up a few bluegills felt like an improper use of an opportunity to explore a new area. Luckily for me, the Sheepshead is the panfish of the saltwater, so it was the perfect marrying of scratching the itch and exploring a new species. Before we dive into fishing, let's understand a little more about this unique species.

Whether you call it Convict-Fish, Sargo, Seabream, or Sheepshead, this fish is sure to turn heads. A gorgeous species of fish, the Sheepshead is defined by fantastic vertical stripes (convict stripes), big shiny eyes, and their round almost bluegill-esque body shape, but the most shocking feature about these beauties is their unbelievable human-like teeth! Seriously, this fish looks like it has grandpa's dentures in its mouth. Their teeth serve a significant purpose, as they feed on mostly crustaceans including oysters, barnacles, clams, and crabs. Behind their row of incisors, they have crushing plates specifically designed to crack the shells of their food of choice, allowing them to eat the meat while discarding the shell. Sheepshead inhabit lots of the Atlantic, ranging from Nova Scotia all the way down to Brazil, however they are most common in the Southeastern United States. Due to their diet, they have fantastically sweet meat, making them a prized-catch for many anglers in the area. Sheepshead are unique, as they cover a vast area of the water, being found

inshore as well as in offshore reefs. Essentially, anywhere their food can grow, they will be found.

Before setting out to chase these predators, I stopped by a local bait shop to gather some info. My goal was to target these fish with artificial baits because it's about 95 degrees where I am, making it hard to keep live bait safe from the elements. However, the bait shop quickly changed my mind, as they said it is quite the waste of time. Their recommendation was using live crabs and a small hook. Sheepshead have a very light bite and are known as bait stealers, so stealth and quick reflexes are paramount in targeting these fish. To me, this sounded just like bluegill fishing back in our local lakes, so I rigged up 3 rods with my typical panfish setups: a drop shot rod, a jig, and a regular split shot and hook setup. After rigging, I went down to the beach and flipped rocks over to find some fiddler crabs and once I had a couple dozen, it was time to go!



Crab is the Atlantic Sheepshead favorite meal.

With the bait shop info and my rods, I set out to find myself some sheepshead locations. Local anglers had told me to look for docks in 5-20 feet of water, the older the better. Essentially, the goal is to find the oldest dock with the most barnacles around to target these fish. After a fast Google Maps scout, I was on the water headed to the spot that looked the most promising to me. Current made it harder to fish than I expected, so quickly I realized simple panfish gear wouldn't cut it. I upsized to more weight and the same small hook, then it was time to get serious. My area was an old burnt down train trestle that had been abandoned for years. It was covered in barnacles and from what I was told, this should be Sheepshead heaven! I focused my casting on the backside of pilings, literally bouncing my setup off a piling, and letting it sink down on the side opposite the current so it would fall as straight as possible. I immediately had little taps on my gear, and thinking

they were smaller scavenger fish, I just passed on setting the hook. I was shocked to keep coming up bait-less, not knowing how little squeaky baitfish could pick off a crab. Well, it didn't take me more than a few casts to figure out I was wrong, when I saw a gorgeous sheepshead chase down my jig tipped with a crab in shallow water. Preparing for a THUMP, I got set in my KVD Bill Dance, Mike Ike Bass Slayer position and waited for the hit. Then I kept waiting for the hit. Then I waited some more for the hit. And waited... and waited... and then I gave up. I pulled my gear up to find, again, I was crab-less. So, this time I set down in the same spot, and when I felt the tiniest tap, similar to a 4 inch perch hitting a nightcrawler, I set the hook. For a split second, my rod was doubled over, then the fish was gone. So, what did I learn, these fish are artists at taking bait! Even the monsters seem to delicately pick the crabs off. I rebait, and here we go again. Wait for the littlest tap, then set it! FISH ON! Immediately, drag is screaming off my line and before I can do anything, I am wrapped 5 times around the piling. Adios to that setup.

It was now apparent I needed a stronger backbone in my rod. I switched to my bass flipping rod and got ready to go again. A short minute later, it was fish on again! I was getting yanked all over the place trying to control this fish. for the tiniest bite ever, this fish was a demon! It does spirals like a bluegill, but its



No, those aren't your grandpa's dentures!

seemingly infinitely stronger. In addition, it's a very smart fish, as it does its best to get around any structure it can and do the death spiral, knowing it can break the line on the barnacles and mussels around the pilings. A long battle later, many prayers about frayed line holding said, and I have a fish in the net. The minimum keeper size is 14 inches, and this specimen was 18 and change. Estimated weight was 4 pounds, a serious beast!

I was shocked by its beauty, and pictures do not do justice to seeing the power and insanity of this fish's jaws. I could not pry the mouth open to get the hook out, and with a row of teeth in front of big crushing plates, that hook was going nowhere. I bent my hook straight trying to get it out, but unable to open its mouth, I gave up and cut the line. I took a 10 minute break from fishing to study this sheepshead, and it is truly unlike anything I had ever held. The best

thing to describe this fish is a giant panfish with a piranha's teeth and the attitude of a spawning smallmouth. Hard headshakes and digs, a bad attitude, and more aggression than a mother bear protecting her cubs. This fish quickly became my favorite fish in the south's saltwater to target.

I spent the next hour chasing these fish and ended up going a measly 3 for 24, as I used up all my crabs (LOL!). The bite is so light, and the mouth is so hard, a perfect hookset had to be taken to put them in the boat. Luckily, the next 2 fishing missions after this species were more successful once I had the hookset down.

Whenever you travel, I highly recommend getting out on the water and learning about the unique species that inhabit the area. Whether you travel with your rods like me or you hire a local expert to expedite the learning process, there is something special about exploring the waterways and making comparisons to fish we know back home. It is amazing to see how similar tactics work all around the nation for different species, as well as learn new tactics which you can bring home. This adventure turned into bluegill fishing for giants, and I was immediately transported back to being 6 and sitting on the dock. Amazing how every fish we catch brings the same joy as the first.

Tight lines all!

DIRECTORY

Destinations

Mardon Resort
(800) 416-2736
mardonresort.com

Liars Cove
(509) 826-1288
liarscoveresort.com

Coulee Playland
(509) 633-2671
couleeplayland.com

Outdoor Gear

Ghunders Performance Base Layers
(360) 612-0506
ghunders.com

Work Sharp Tools
(800) 597-6170
worksharptools.com

Marine Gear

Taylor Marine
(253) 677-9400

Precision Propeller
(509) 489-7765
precisionpropco.com

IFish Solutions
(509) 954-3883
ifishsolutions.com

Guides & Charters

Austin's Northwest Adventures
(509) 668-0298
austinsnorthwestadventures.com

Captain Dave's Guide Service
(509) 939-6727
lakerooseveltffishingguide.com

Chrome Inc.
(425) 591-5108
chromeinc.org

D&H Guide Service
(509) 759-0098
wasalmonfishing.com

Darrell & Dads Family Guide Service
(509) 687-0709
darrellanddads.com

Double M Outdoors
(503) 956-5489
doublemoutdoors.com

Fast Action Guide Service
(425) 753-5772
fastactionfishingseattle.com

Jones Sportfishing
(208) 861-0654
jonessportfishing.com

Mitchell Sportfishing
(509) 480-5945
mitchellsportfishing.com

MoonsGuideService
(509) 860-6497
moonsguideservice.com

Reel Obsession
(888) 855-7335
reelobsession.ca

Reel Time Fishing
(208) 790-2128
reeltimefishing.com

Rising Son GS
(509) 492-8852
risingsonadventures.wixsite.com/
fishing

Ross Outdoor Adventures
(509) 750-7763
rossoutdooradventures.com

SJM Guide Service
(509) 435-6486
sjmguideservice.com

Steel Dreams Guide Service
(509) 869-9694
steeldreamsfishing.com

YJ Guide Service
(509) 999-0717
yjguideservice.com

Fishing Tackle

Dutch Fork Custom Lures
(724) 884-3977
dutchforkcustomlures.com

Fish With Gary
(541) 536-1002
fishwithgary.com

Lip Ripper Lures
(907) 599-0331
lipripperlures.com

Mack's Lure
(509) 667 9202
mackslure.com

Mauk's Fishing Stuff
(509) 689-3164
fishingtacklecovers.com

Old Goat Lures
oldgoatlures.com

Superfly Flies
(208) 610-9280
superflyflies.com

Wigglefin Tackle
(208) 388-8539
wigglefin.com

Other

Scuttlebutt
(425) 252-2829
scuttlebuttbrewing.com

Tanners Fresh Fish Processing
(866) 209-4882
tannersfish.com

Skip Rock Distillers
(360) 862-0272
skiprockdistillers.com

Email today for directory
advertising information.

sales@northwestfishingreports.com



Life Outdoors

The Weekender Report

The sun is setting earlier and the leaves are starting to turn – signs of another change of season. Fall is in the air, and hunters are heading out for the year's major hunting seasons as anglers are still reeling in salmon from the Columbia River, Puget Sound, and other fisheries, plus trout from lakes throughout Washington. Bird watchers are planning adventures to celebrate the fall migration.

Columbia River salmon

All areas, including Buoy 10, remain open for coho fishing in September. Buoy 10 Chinook retention closed in late August, but remains open through Sept. 9 for Tongue Point-Warrior Rock, and all of September for waters upstream (including above Bonneville Dam). Steelhead is closed in all areas. Check the [2021-2022 Sport Fishing Rules](#) pamphlet and WDFW's emergency rules webpage.

Puget Sound halibut

Reel in halibut in Puget Sound and along the northern coast: [Halibut season](#) kicked off in mid-August and is expected to remain open three days a week, Thursday, Fridays, and Saturdays, through Sept. 25 or until the remaining quota is reached.

Trout

The [2021 Trout Derby](#) continues through Oct. 31! No entrance fee or registration required. Just catch a tagged trout and you win. You can find more information on lakes that still have prizes on our trout derby webpage.

Puget Sound and ocean salmon

Several marine areas offer anglers opportunities to fish for salmon in September. Make sure to check the [2021-22 fishing regulations](#) and emergency regulations before heading out. You can also download the Fish Washington mobile app, which provides up-to-date fishing regulations on your phone.

Crabbing on Labor Day

Most areas of Puget Sound will be open to [recreational crab fishing](#) until sunset on Labor Day, Sept. 6. The San Juan Islands/Bellingham (Marine Area 7 South) and the Gulf of Georgie (Marine Area 7 North) will remain open through Sept. 30. The coast remains open year-round.

Wildfire danger remains high

We expect continued [restrictions, closures, and wildfire danger](#) this autumn. Recreate responsibly by following burn restrictions, reporting violations, never parking on dry grass, and frequently checking under your boat or trailer to remove loose or dragging chains. Finally, before heading out on your outdoor adventure, make sure your destination is open to avoid disappointment. We can all play a role in preventing tragedy.

Click for
more

WDFW Weekender Report

Click through for region specific opportunities

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Kelly Susewind
WDFW Director



“Fishing, hiking, camping, bird-watching, all aspects of Life Outdoors, are mainstays of summer. Summer also brings opportunities for renewed commitment to respectful enjoyment and stewardship of your public lands and water access areas. This is a great time to be outside and your support is what makes this possible.”

[WDFW Director Kelly Susewind's Full Message](#)

[Click for more](#)

WATCH NOW

Climate change affects everything in nature: fish, wildlife, habitat, ecosystems, us. As stewards, we must act now to protect the places and activities we love. Check out our video about climate change, its impact on hunters, anglers and recreationalists in Washington, and small ways you can help be part of the solution.



Climate change and its impact on hunting, angling, and other recreational pursuits

SEPTEMBER NOTICES

CELEBRATING ESTUARIES

[National Estuaries Week](#)

(Sept. 18-25) is a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to local communities. Watch WDFW's social media for engaging posts and ideas for what you can do to conserve estuaries and support these important fish and wildlife habitat areas in the Pacific Northwest.

FREE DAY, 3RD SATURDAY IN SEPTEMBER

Celebrate [Public Lands Day](#) with free entrance to state lands on Saturday, Sept. 25th— no Discover Pass or Vehicle Pass required. Enjoy a day in Washington's great outdoors and remember to [#RecreateResponsibly!](#)

September Dates

- Sept. 16-18 Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Sept. 18-19 Youth-only hunts
- Sept. 18-25 National Estuaries Week
- Sept. 25 Public Lands Free Day

WIN A SALMON FISHING TRIP FOR TWO

SCUTTLEBUTT
BREWING CO.



WITH NORTHWEST FISHING REPORTS AND SCUTTLEBUTT BREWING CO.

SEPT. 25
EDMONDS, WA



DETAILS:

If you win, you and your guest will fish alongside **NWFR Hosts Mike Carey and Rob Holman.**

The fishing trip may even be filmed and appear on an episode of NWFR's Sunday TV show on Q13. You will also be joining Rob and Mike at the **Scuttlebutt Family Restaurant** in Everett after fishing on the 25th.

All fishing and tackle supplies will be provided.



Sign up at
scuttlebuttbrewing.com

*Must be 18 years or older to enter. Anglers must provide their own WDFW saltwater fishing license and salmon catch card. Winner will be announced by Sept 17th. Deadline for entries is September 15th. Television and fishing subject to weather, WDFW regulations and safety conditions. No other fishing dates offered. Must be willing to sign a television waiver to be eligible.