

REEL LIFE

23 COVER STORY

REEL TIME IN CABO

Photo by Toby Wyatt
In Loving Memory of Capt. Shane Reynolds

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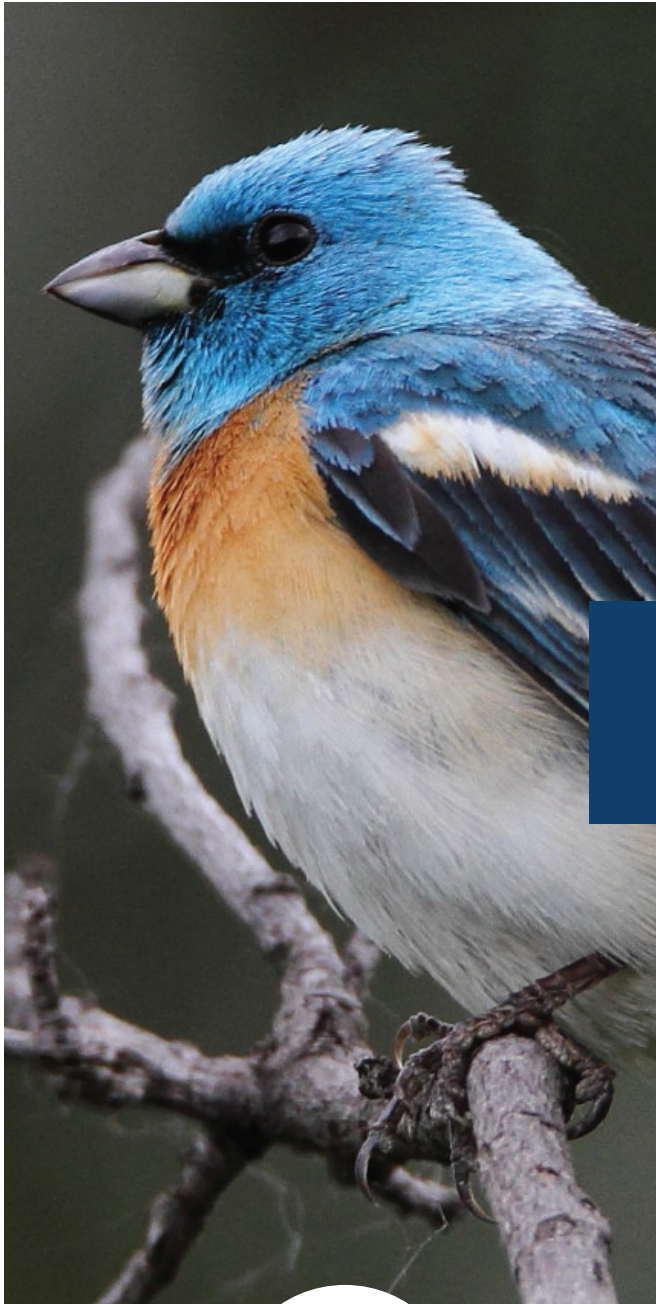
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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Hello Readers! The Big News for the Pacific Northwest has to be the awesome sockeye returns shaping up for Baker Lake. With a forecast of over 50,000 fish and strong early returns the limit has been raised to 5 sockeye per day. With the backdrop of Mt Baker, this is one of the most beautiful places to go fishing in the PNW. The fishing will be strong well into August, after the early crowds have moved on. In this issue, Randy Castello goes over late season tips for Baker. Be sure to add it to your calendar to check out this amazing fishery!

Here in Montana several rivers will go into "hoot owl" regulations to reduce catch and release stress on fish. Regardless of regs, handle your fish with extra care in the hot summer season. My son Matt and I have caught some huge rainbow and brown trout this summer, not to mention a beautiful 25" walleye Matt caught and released.

August can bring some hot weather so be sure to stay hydrated and use that sunscreen!

Mike Carey - mikec@nwfishing.net @Michael Carey Northwest Fishing



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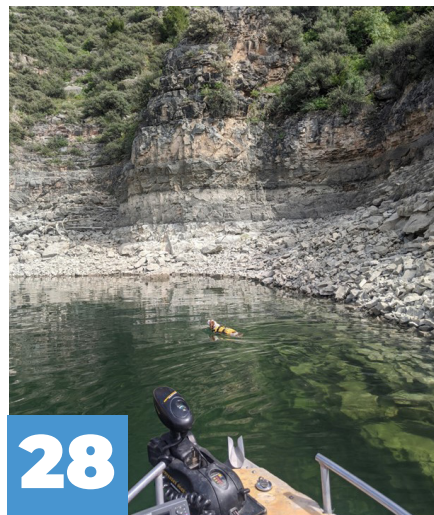
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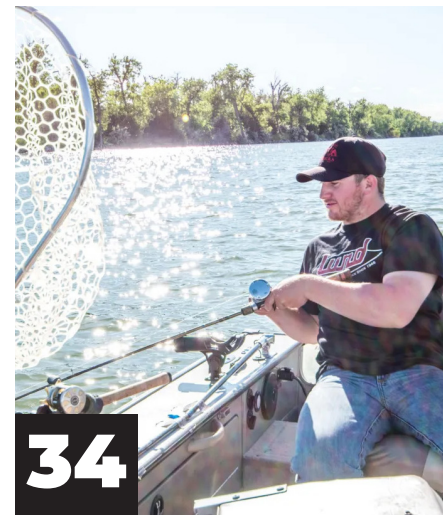
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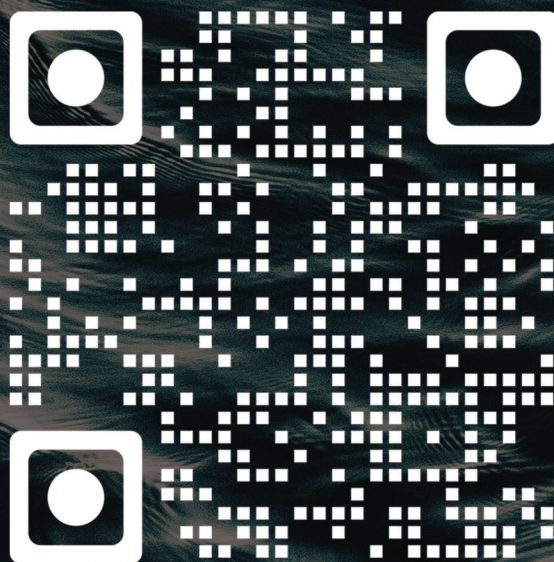
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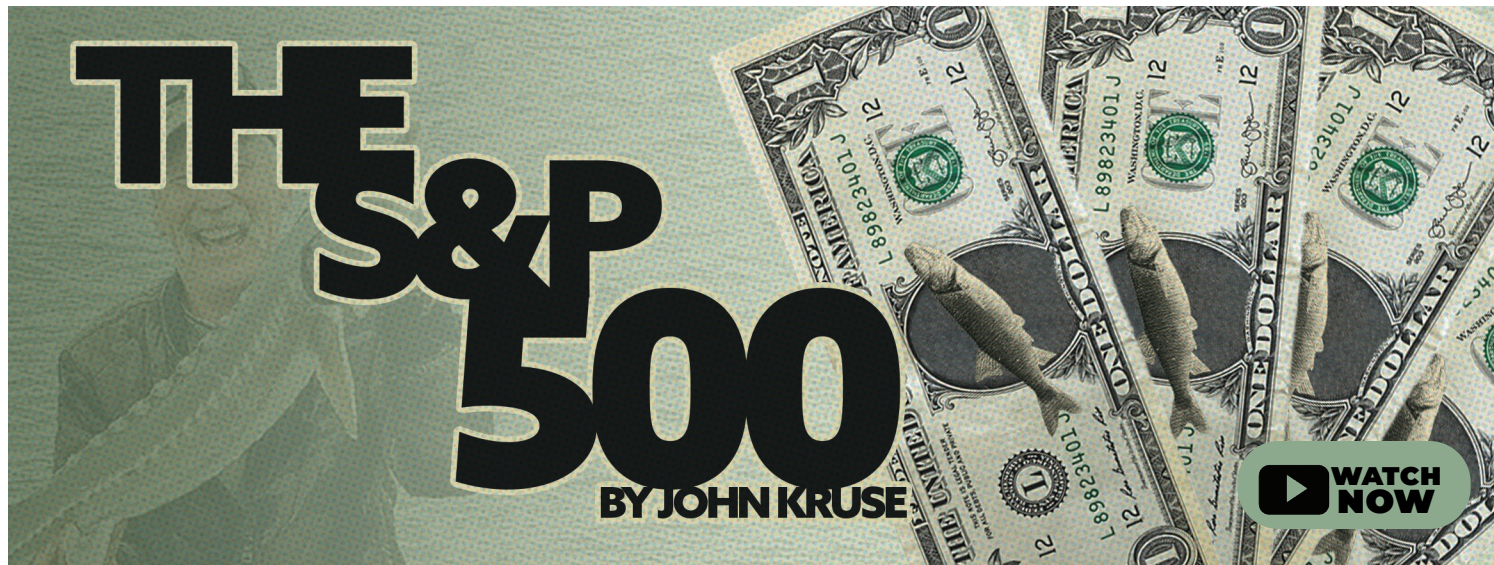


NORTHERN PIKEMINNOW SPORT-REWARD PROGRAM

The Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program pays anglers \$6, \$8 and \$10 for each qualifying pikeminnow caught within the program boundaries. Specially tagged pikeminnow are worth \$500. Top anglers have earned more than \$100,000. Find rules, regulations and registration info at pikeminnow.org.



PIKEMINNOW.ORG



Most folks think of the S & P 500 as a stock market index, but on a recent trip to the Columbia River Gorge, I realized it had a fishing meaning as well. Namely, the opportunity to catch 500 shad and pikeminnow over the course of a week!

My friend Rusty Johnston and I spent a couple of days fishing on the Columbia River between Rufus and The Dalles. Our first goal was to catch a bunch of shad, not just for fun, but also to use for crab bait this summer. Our second goal was to catch some pikeminnow and turn them in for money through the Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Fishery Program.

This program is administered by the Bonneville Power Administration along with both the Washington and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The northern pikeminnow is a native fish, but fish nine inches and longer feed on outgoing salmon and steelhead smolt, impacting the survival of both species.

In this program, anglers are paid anywhere from \$6 to \$10 a fish

for any pikeminnow turned into a designated station along the Columbia or Snake River. The more fish you catch, the more they are worth and if you catch a tagged fish, it is worth \$500. You can find out more about this program, designed not to eliminate, but control the population of pikeminnow, at www.pikeminnow.org.

Rusty and I decided to start our trip fishing for shad below the John Day Dam. You can fish below the dam on both the Washington and Oregon side of the river, but we decided to buy a non-resident license at Gorge Outfitters Supply in Rufus and fish the Oregon side at Giles French Park.

We were using Shad Killers, a local jig sold at Gorge Outfitters Supply, and the hot color for us was red and white. The Shad Killer is a 1/16-ounce jig with a bit of flashabou on it. We tied the jig onto a two-to-three-foot leader which we tied to a barrel swivel. Above the swivel we had another swivel which held a 1/2 ounce lead weight. Other lures that work well with this set up are shad darts and Dick Nite spoons.

We cast our offering from the bank, let it sink a few seconds, and the reeled in with a slow to moderate retrieve as the lure drifted downstream. We were soon rewarded by hook ups with a whole bunch of shad. The American Shad averages one to three pounds in size. They are scrappy fighters and up to six million of them make their way over Bonneville Dam between the end of May and mid-July, all heading up the Columbia to spawn. I have enjoyed good days on the water catching shad before, but this day was epic!

Rusty and I hooked into some 50 shad in just two hours of fishing. We lost a few (they have a nasty habit of throwing the hook) but reeled in some three-dozen fish, getting more than enough crab bait for the summer.

Speaking of uses for shad, the oily fish is also a favorite bait for sturgeon, and some even cut them up into chunks to use for catfish bait. Still others will eat them. We met one angler at a cleaning station at Maryhill State Park who carefully filleted out the shad he caught. He told me he brines them and puts them in a

pressure cooker (which gets rid of the bones) before canning them. He said the fish taste very good. I will have to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Finished with shad, we next registered at a check station and fished around The Dalles for pikeminnow. We only caught four keeper pikeminnow (worth \$6 each) but since this was our first time participating, we also each got to turn in a coupon worth \$10 each after checking in our first fish. Better still, three anglers from Idaho were desperate for sturgeon bait and paid us \$20 for a single shad which they promptly put to use, casting their lines out at The Dalles marina, hoping to hook into a monster fish. Altogether, we made \$64. That covered a good portion of our gas money getting back home.

One other fun thing about fishing for pikeminnow are the other fish you catch. I ended up catching eight perch, and we both also caught smallmouth bass on the nightcrawlers we were using for pikeminnow bait, fished just off the bottom of the river with a two-ounce sliding weight. Rusty caught the most interesting bycatch of the day though, a 30-to-33-inch sturgeon on a bass rod that was spooled with braided line and just a 10-lb leader. It took him 15 minutes to get that prehistoric looking fish to shore, at which point I snapped a photo of the fish and he released it. It made for the end of a perfect day of fishing!

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Coho are one of the most sought-after salmon in the Pacific Northwest. For the saltwater angler, the coho bite can be a bit chaotic, with the fish running in large schools and being active biters when the conditions are right. They can also be a bit frustrating if you are not using the right gear or fishing the right presentation. By keying in on techniques that work the topwater and get the coho to bite, you can increase your catch rate and fill the coolers with great eating, hard fighting silver salmon. Silver salmon like to swim fast and attack their prey. Known for their topwater action, coho tend to be close to the surface. This makes for a great fishery because you are not constantly trying to work the bottom and worrying about losing a downrigger ball like you are when chasing after chinook that are on a sandlance bite.

When it comes to catching coho, there are few things you can do to increase your catch rates. Lose the bait to catch more fish. It might seem like using a fresh anchovy or a perfectly plug cut herring would lead to more fish but rigging these baits takes time. When you get into the schools of coho, the action can be fast, which means you will catch more fish if you can keep your gear in the water longer. Same with getting it back into the water faster, and anyone who has rigged an anchovy hood knows that you need to set it correctly and that takes valuable time.

Spoons are one of the more popular lures because they are simple and are always working even if you miss a bite. Keep the spoons small such as the Coho Killer or a 3.0 or 3.5 Coyote spoon in sardine or rainbow trout patterns. The rainbow trout spoon looks more like a herring or mackerel and it has a glow back to it for low light such as cloudy days.

Another spoon that is popular with coho fishing is the Skinny Gee in Herring Aide color. When running a spoon behind a flasher, it is best to go a bit longer on the leader such as 42" as this allows the spoon to flutter.

Sometimes spoons don't draw the fish to strike. Give tube flies a try. This is a technique often used in the Great Lakes by salmon fishermen and by fly anglers chasing after fall coho along the shoreline. The ocean angler can take advantage of these lightweight lures that mimic baitfish. One of the best things about a tube fly is that they can be fished behind a dodger or a flasher or all alone, since they have low drag and are lightweight. Tube flies tend to have an erratic action that coho can't resist, especially if you put a Mack's wiggle bill in front of them. Bechhold and Son's make a unique flasher with offset holes to add extra action. They have teamed up with Rapture Trolling

Flies, a Great Lakes company, and offer a combo set matched together and ready to fish. If you already tie your own flies, you can pick up a tube fly adapter and tie your own easily.


Add flash and movement to your squids. When rigging a squid skirt with an insert or a tube fly, such as the Luhr Jensen Flash Fly (unrigged version, as they are smaller than the pre-rigged Flash Fly) to be fished behind a dodger or flasher, be sure to use a short and stout leader. Try using 30 or even 40-pound test as the stiff leader will give the lure more action. The idea is to get the lure to move in an erratic motion and make the dodger look like a feeding salmon with the lure being a wounded baitfish. It creates the "bite now" instinct of the feeding coho and tricks it into thinking the other salmon, which is the dodger, missed the baitfish and now it's there for a free meal.

Using an insert into a hoochie or squid skirt adds attraction and can turn on a bite. The past few years we have been using the Luhr Jensen Flash Fly inserts and putting them into a squid skirt. By doing this you can make several different combinations of colors to attract the fish or add some extra UV flash for those cloudy days. You can also add a Mack's Lure Wiggle Bill to the front to add extra movement. Try using an artificial wounded baitfish lure. Lures that mimic a wounded baitfish are the SpinFish by Yakima Bait Company, Brad's Super Bait Cut Plug, and the new Spin Dawg by Simon, who also makes a Spin Cut Plug that has a hole at the tip of the lure making rigging much easier with no rubber bands or chance

of it coming apart. The Simon products are solid and have a scent chamber. Each of these lures is made of hard plastic and has a hollow cavity inside where you can stuff them with scent or minced-up baitfish such as anchovies or herring. For these lures, use a longer leader with a bead chain swivel in the middle since the lure provides the action that creates that need to bite reaction by rotating and spinning.

When using artificial lures such as spoons, squid skirts, and the hollow cavity lures, scent is crucial. Unlike when you use a real baitfish that has oils being released and the fish know it is an actual herring, the use of artificial lures is only a visual attraction unless you scent it up. The cavity lures like the SpinFish offer a way to fill them with various baits to create a scent trail. One common bait is to mix canned tuna fish with your favorite scents. Because the lure holds the minced-up bait, one of the better scent mediums to use is one of the many water-soluble scents from Pro-Cure. When the scent leaks out of the lure, it mixes with the water and stays at the same depth as the lure, creating a large scent trail for the fish.


Oil-based scents such as Pro-Cure's super sauces, gels, and oils hold a scent well and last a long time, but the scent will not mix well with water. This means when it is washed off the scent trail starts to float. Water-soluble oils wash off lures and squid skirts too quickly which is why you should use oil-based scents for these lures, but it will not gum up or ruin the action of a tube fly, just be sure to apply frequently.



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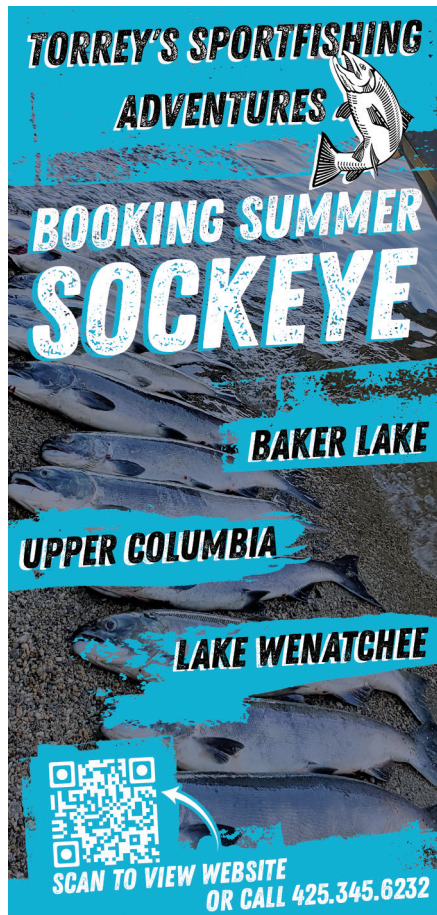


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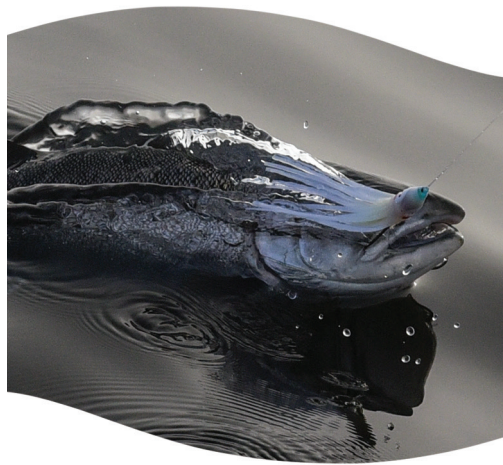
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Knowing which scent to use is more than just the baitfish it is made from, but also which ones are best to stay on the lures you are fishing.

Downsize the dodgers and flashers. The idea behind using a dodger or flasher is to create a feeding salmon scenario as well as add action to your lure. Since you are fishing for coho, be sure to match the dodger and flasher to the size of the fish. Most use the standard 11-inch flasher but the 8-inch flasher is a better choice. Instead of the attacking salmon looking like a chinook with the 11-inch, the 8-inch reflects light more to the natural size of a coho. It is also less drag and that means you can fight the fish better. The smaller dodgers and flashers also work well at faster trolling speeds.



The Sling Blade dodger from Mack's lure is a very universal dodger that is designed to work well at fast speeds. Since it is a long teardrop design you can bend it to create a more dramatic dodge or side-to-side action, or you can keep it straight and troll it fast. This design also cuts through the water well and allows you to fight the fish and not the dodger, even when using the larger 9-inch version. The dodger comes with UV-treated colors and is offered in many sizes, which allows you to change it up to the varied sizes of lures you are using.

Since coho are often found actively feeding near the surface, you do not always need to use downriggers. Instead, trolling with a mooching weight that cuts through the water easily and a simple lure behind can be a way to either add an extra rod out of the back of the boat or not deal with the downriggers altogether. Again, the more you can keep your lines in the water, the more fish you will catch. When rigging this outfit, use a longer leader around 48 inches with a bead chain swivel in the middle and a lure that imparts action such as the SpinFish, Brad's Cut Plug, or Simon Spin Dawg.

But do not overlook the tube fly or even the squid skirt with the addition of a Wiggle Hoochie Bill. These small plastic bills from Mack's Lure are simple to use, just slide it down the leader to the head of the squid skirt and push it into the collar. If using a tube fly then adding a bobber stop knot or rubber bobber stop to the front of the bill will keep it tight to the fly.

The Wiggle Hoochie Bill act much like the bill on a plug, but instead of creating a diving motion, it moves the lure in side to side in and erratic motion. They also come in an assortment of colors and are UV treated to add even more visual attraction.

Coho are known for their acrobatic fights, often coming right up to the surface and jumping, but a dodger or flasher can take away from the fight and even become a problem when the fish jumps. The attractor breaks the surface of the water pulling in an opposite direction and taking the hooks with it. When using downriggers, you can rig in a way that the dodger or flasher stays with the downrigger ball and you get to fight the fish without any extra drag on the line. To do this, either use one of the lures with action or the added Wiggle Hoochie Bill and then a downrigger clip that is above the ball. Use a short section of cord or very stout mono line such as 50-pound test from the flasher or dodger attached to the downrigger ball, and then set the downrigger clip twice the length of the cord above the ball. If you run the dodger or flasher behind the downrigger ball 36-inches, then set the downrigger clip 72-inches, or 6 feet, above the downrigger ball.

Then run your lure back just a few feet from the clip. This will keep your lure from tangling with the flasher or dodger, and yet when the salmon sees the attractor, it will look like the baitfish got away and they will grab the lure. This works really well with plug cut herring or an anchovy with a bait hood, as well as lures that don't need the imparted action of a dodger or flasher. One other great trick when using this way of fishing is to use the Scent Flash triangle flasher from Mack's Lure, as these flashers are designed to hold scents inside of them. As the triangle flasher spins, it creates a very large scent cone out of it as it disperses the scent. When using these, you don't need to use a leader or cord, but instead you can attach it directly to the downrigger ball, which means you can also keep your lure a lot

closer to it as well.

Run timing and knowing which fish you are targeting will lead to more fish. Ocean coho are found all along the coastlines from Oregon to Alaska, and the feeding fish will often work along the shoreline, feeding on herring, candlefish, anchovies, and various other prey in the kelp beds and protected waters around islands. Look to the rocky breaks often found just offshore and find the coho. Even when out in the open ocean, where the fish will form large schools to travel from their feeding grounds to the rivers each fall, the fish will still be "shallow".

Not the depth of the water but where they are in the water column, meaning closer to the top.

When it becomes prime time for ocean coho but weather and fishing seasons keep you away from the open seas, resident coho fishing can produce a fishery for the avid angler. Puget Sound and the various inlets around Vancouver Island offer coho that do not head out too far away feeding grounds but instead live "inside". Starting in May and all through the summer, resident coho fishing is good. Using the same techniques as fall fish, the angler can perfect their coho set-ups. Look for points along the shoreline as silvers tend to use them as tide breaks that will harbor baitfish. Where you find resident coho you will also find ocean-bound fish once they return. This is where you want to be when the runs start to show up in August and continue to flood through October.



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FIRST WATER ON THE *Rogue*

BY GARY LEWIS



We slid down out of a tail-out and into the next riffle. I was in the bow, tilted into the front brace, rod up.

"Cast left, this side has the fast water." Twenty-three-year-old Cole McAuliffe, of Chrome Tales Guide Service, was on the sticks, his curly hair around his shoulders.

McAuliffe flicked the right oar and lifted the left. Water ran down off the blade and the boat caught in the current.

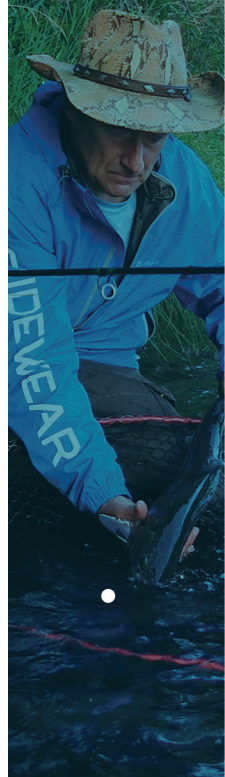
I flopped an inelegant short cast, looped an upstream mend, and watched the two-fly rig catch the foam line past a jagged submerged rock. Sloppy but perfect. The float plunged and I lifted the rod into a summer steelhead that rocketed out of the shallow slot and into the air, twisting three feet above the water.

Oh, there is something about hooking a summer steelhead on a fly when you know the leader is 10-pound test and you have a lot of river!

We were only 20 minutes off the launch and no one on the water ahead of us or behind us. Is this not the great Rogue River? Where is everybody? But then I remembered, it was the hottest week of the summer and the rafts and tubes would hit the river about 11 in the morning. And I would be with them, except I'm older and smarter.

We met each other earlier this summer when I helped McAuliffe find a highly efficient German shorthair chukar dog, and after the deal was done we both saw a drift-boat shaped hole in our August calendars.

Out of the launch with the sun just breaking over the Cascades, McAuliffe charged the boat straight across the river to a favorite run where a fat sea-run cutthroat waited for us. Now, barely ten minutes later, we had a steelhead on the line, on 10-pound Maxima, charging downstream.



Down through the taylor of the next riffle we followed it, and before I could get the fish's head up, it tail-walked again. Moments later, McAuliffe grabbed the net and made one stab for it when the fish was close, as if we had been fishing together for years instead of just the last 20 minutes. I jumped over the side into the shallows and lifted the wild fish out of the net and showed it to the young guide with the Wild Bill Hickock haircut, shooting my camera. But the fish was done with handshakes and flipped out of my grasp. Five pounds of shiny summer steel, back into the water from whence she came.

There are not as many good summer run rivers in Oregon as there used to be, as hatchery managers have ratcheted back on the good times we enjoyed in the '80s and '90s. Did we have too much fun then and now we have to work harder for our fish? Guess so.

McAuliffe, by my calculations, was born at the end of that era and, as fishing guide is his chosen profession in the 2020's, he is probably going to hear from a lot of middle-aged clients about how it used to be. Today a fishing guide has to work harder. And get up earlier in the morning.

Now I had steelhead lenses on, reading water left and right, with Cole sliding the boat from one

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good slot to the other.

Depending on the water, I used my fiberglass 5-weight to swing a fly or his 6-weight TFO with the float and two-fly rig. McAuliffe said the summer run steelhead season has started stronger than last year and while a lot of guides are using spinning gear, he prefers to stick with the fly rod.

At the business end is a No. 10 beadhead with a heavily weighted stonefly nymph to get to the bottom fast. We adjusted the float to run about 2X the depth of each run.

We looked back upstream. Still no one behind us. Still no one ahead. We had first water all the way to the takeout. And trout in every drift. A few were hatchery rainbows and a few were smolts, and they beat the steelhead to the fly.

Trout chased the float, they chased the stonefly out of the water on the retrieves and swiped at the point fly, and I expected a fish on every drift.

Get up early in the morning to beat the floaters and the cone-lickers. Go for the trout fishing and let the steelhead surprise you.

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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PINK SALMON

Pink salmon are one of the most unique fish out there. They have a two-year life cycle and return to their spawning rivers when they are two years old. Interestingly, they only run on odd years in Washington State. There are about 4 million pink salmon projected to run throughout the Sound this year. Though they're the smallest of the Pacific salmon, they still put up a good fight and taste great. They are excellent on the grill, especially on a cedar plank. Many anglers smoke them as well. They are the first salmon that many anglers catch in this state because they are more plentiful and easy to catch than their larger cousins. They're easier for kids to handle and they tend to be aggressive, willing biters. Around this time of year, pinks flood the Sound and begin to stage near their home rivers. One of the best things about pink salmon is that you don't need a boat to catch them from the shore or pier. They tend to swim within casting distance most of the time, and at this point in their life cycle they are still actively feeding, so they aggressively attack most offerings they see.

With millions of pink salmon cruising by the shoreline looking for a meal, this is the perfect time to head to your local saltwater pier or beach and bring home some pinks for the grill.

By and large, most shore anglers fish for pink salmon with jigs. There's no need to use bait because pink salmon will aggressively bite a well-presented jig. Buzz Bombs and Rotators are the most commonly used jigs. They are easy to use and thousands of pink salmon readily gobble them up every year. They are designed to resemble a wounded baitfish, and they flutter erratically as they fall. Rigging them up is pretty simple: put on your buzz bomb, then thread on a bead and a bumper. Then tie directly to your hook (don't forget to pinch the barb if it's required). I usually use a 1/0 or 2/0 hook for pinks. To use jigs, cast out to where you think the fish are at, let your jig sink for a few seconds, then reel in and lift your rod tip up. Next, quickly lower your rod tip and let the jig fall. Repeat this until you reach the shore or catch a fish. Make sure to jig all the way until shore- sometimes the fish will follow your lure and strike at the

last second. Most of your strikes will be as the jig is falling. If you get a bite, quickly set the hook and keep up the pressure, especially if you're using barbless hooks.

As their name suggests, pink salmon love the color pink!

It's a good idea to start with that color, then switch it up if you aren't getting fish. Buzz Bombs come in a variety of different weights. For pinks, I'd suggest using the lightest weight that you can cast well. If the bite is slow, try rubbing on some shrimp, anise, or herring scent.

Gel based scent will cling to the jig longer. You can also thread on a small pink hoochie for extra action. If switching lures doesn't work, you can switch locations as well. Sometimes just walking down for a few minutes on the beach can make all the difference.

Another viable option if fish don't seem to be hitting your jig is to use spinners. Vibrax spinners tend to be light, so it's a good idea to thread on some bullet weights above a swivel to help get them down to where the fish are at. Several other brands such as Mepps make heavier spinners that will get to the proper depth

EVERYWHERE!

BY HANNAH PENNEBAKER



without additional weight. Bring several options, and don't be afraid to add scent or thread a hoochie on.

For your rod and reel, I'd recommend using a rod that can handle $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. weights, probably around 8 to 10 feet in length. I highly recommend using braided line because you can feel those sensitive bites easier, but mono will definitely do the job. A size 3000 to 4000 reel will have plenty of backbone to handle the fish. Remember to rinse your reel after fishing, saltwater is very corrosive and can cause damage if not washed off.

Wondering where to start? Les Davis Pier, Edmonds Pier, Des Moines Pier, Browns Point, and Point No Point are all popular locations that reliably produce pinks every year. Any beach with a point and a good drop-off will most likely hold fish. Expect to have some company, though. Just be patient and try to avoid tangling your line with other anglers, especially if the current is strong. If you go to a pier, have a plan for netting your catch. Most piers are too far from the water to be able to use traditional nets. Pier anglers have taken to using crab

rings. Just lower them down to the water and scoop up your fish. It takes some practice though! Beach anglers need not use a net, simply back up and swing your fish onto the beach.

As always, be sure to check the rules and regulations before going fishing. Don't forget to swap those treble hooks for barbless single-point hooks, if required. You can buy barbless hooks or simply pinch the barb yourself with pliers. If you're new to salmon fishing, WDFW offers salmon identification guides. It's important to be able to tell the difference between salmon species, because they are regulated differently. You may be able to keep pinks but not chinook, for example. In general, hatcheries do not clip pink salmon fins, so don't worry about checking if they're hatchery or wild. The way to identify pink salmon is by checking the gums and the spots on the tail. Pink salmon have large spots on the tail and a white mouth with black gum line and tongue. For optimum meat quality, don't forget to bleed and gut your catch before going home. Despite what some anglers say, pink salmon

tastes great on the smoker or grill. Since they don't have as much fat as their cousins, they have a milder taste than other salmon, which some people actually enjoy more. My favorite way to eat them is to season them with some of my favorite rub and then grill them on cedar or alder planks. They're a great summertime treat that the entire family will love!

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Whoo-hoo! The long-coveted Baker Lake sockeye season is in progress! The 2023 Baker Lake sockeye season is proving to be an interesting one. Through the North of Falcon process, the planned opener was scheduled to be Saturday July 15th. Because record numbers of sockeye have signed up for a ride in the fish taxi, the WDFW decided to open the fishery 1 week earlier. The opener was July 8th and the action has been on fire. It was reported that boat limits were the norm and many ice chests were full just a few hours or so after splashing the boat. In fact, on opening day one of the fishing specialists at Holiday Sports in Burlington, Philip Chuprinov, his wife Alexis and gang got their 12 fish boat limits in in less time than it took to drive to the lake and back.

OK, the fishing is good, but what is a “fish taxi” and why the early opener? Sockeye in Baker Lake are native to the system.

After the Upper Baker Dam was constructed in 1959, sockeye were cut off from access to the natural Baker Lake. With limited success, various methods were used to trap and transport returning adult sockeye to the newly formed Baker Lake, while smolts were left to out migrate via controlled spillway releases. By 1985 the population crashed, and the trap count was only 99 fish. As a component of PSE’s permit to generate power, PSE developed a mitigation plan for sockeye recovery.

Long story short; both Baker Lake and now Lake Shannon have a surface to lake bed “gulper” net that funnels out-migrating sockeye smolts into a collection facility where they are processed, counted, and then transported for release at a trap facility on the Baker River in Concrete. The returning adult fish are trapped analyzed and then loaded into live transport trucks, AKA “fish taxis”, and transported up the hill.

Some sockeye are placed in artificial spawning bed runs while others are held as hatchery broodstock. The rest are released into Baker Lake.

Historically, the Baker Lake sockeye run slowly ramps up, then spikes during the second week in July. This year, after a very short ramp up of 200-400 fish a day, on June 27th the fish counts absolutely exploded. For the next 10 days, the daily trap count was running from 1,200-3,000 fish. With agreement of the North of Falcon team, the WDFW made the decision to maximize the fishing opportunity and open the fishery 1 week early.

The 2023 Baker Lake sockeye season is July 8th – August 31st but may close early to assure that 1,500 fish are able to spawn naturally in the lake. There is a 3 fish daily limit for adult sockeye. With the two-pole endorsement, two poles are allowed and all anglers onboard a boat may deploy gear until each angler onboard has caught their

daily limit. Because Baker Lake is actively monitored for regulation compliance, make sure to record your catch before you redeploy the gear. The Baker Lake catch code is 825. Are you jonesing for a grilled sockeye fillet or a bowl of fresh sockeye poke yet? If so, read on, if not there's always a Safeway seafood counter nearby (it's probably cheaper).

There are 5 launch ramps on Baker Lake. They are as follows.

PSE BAKER LAKE (KULSHAN)

The boat ramp has a moderate grade. Concrete blocks have been placed along the side of the ramp for protection from erosion. No designated disabled parking. The parking lot slopes slightly. Nearby, Kulshan Campground offers campsites, a RV dump station, and both restrooms and porta potties. Overnight parking is discouraged within the boat ramp parking area but is available just down the hill from the ramp. Kulshan is typically my go to launch ramp.

HORSESHOE COVE

The boat ramp has a gentle grade. Launching and load occur on both sides of the gravel and sand bar. The surface is uneven from wave erosion and vehicle use. No designated disabled parking. Horseshoe Cove Campground also offers campsites, drinking water, picnic area, group camp area, and vault toilets. Overnight parking is available. 4-wheel drive is advisable.

PANORAMA POINT

The boat ramp has a gentle to moderate grade, lots of parking and a vault toilet. The Panorama Point Campground is separate from the launch.

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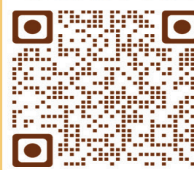


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Depending on lake level, the asphalt ramp approach stops short of the shoreline. Additionally, a drop off has been created by wave action and the gravel is becoming rutted from parking lot run-off. With the uncertain ramp conditions, 4-wheel drive is advisable.

SWIFT CREEK

The Swift Creek launch is paved or concrete and is usable at all lake levels. There is a tall bulkhead wall on one side with a short log boom on the other side of the ramp. There is also a small marina adjacent to the ramp. The marina has limited non-reservable short term tie up but no services or fuel. Swift Creek Campground offers campsites, drinking water, picnic shelters, a group camp area, and vault toilets. Overnight parking is available. I advise that you have a capable mate at this ramp. If solo, there are no provision to tie up your boat right at the ramp. Solo, you'll have to deal with your boat after launching and you'll be holding up traffic. Unless you're offering free coffee and doughnuts, generally not a good thing at 2:30 in the morning when there is a long line of headlights glaring at you... Having somebody run the boat while you go park is a solid community-based plan.

SHANNON CREEK CAMPGROUND

The boat ramp has a gentle to moderate grade. Ruts are developing around the ramp due to the runoff from the parking lot drainage. Waves have been creating some erosion along the shoreline. No designated disabled parking. Shannon Creek Campground also offers campsites, drinking water, picnic sites and a vault toilet. This varies year to year, but they may be limiting launch access to campers registered at Shannon Creek Campground. 4-wheel drive is advisable, and this is the best launch for hand launch boats and inflatables. With just a short run you're in Grand Central Sock-station.

Maybe a few words regarding the logistics and fishing Baker Lake. Once you turn onto Baker Lake Road there will be no services, fuel, food, or camping supplies available. Make sure your pre-trip planning includes extra fuel, ice, propane or whatever you'll need for your trip. Early morning, evening and anytime you're in the shade there will be mosquitos. Not a few pesky mosquitos but a large squadron of blood thirsty flying vampires, I think they even have radar, night vision, and little stick figures drawn on their blood engorged bodies.

As a bonus, I even stepped on a yellow jacket nest last year, be aware. Above all, this is a true combat fishery. Patience and ramp courtesy will assure everyone enjoys the experience.

After some deep thought I think that the biggest thing I can say about late season Baker Lake sockeye fishing is patience. The fishing can be very hot or very cold. Whereas the day before, limits may have been the rule, it is not always, and fishing may be dead. Slow fishing or otherwise, there are a few things you can do to improve your odds and put a few late season fish in the box.

As mentioned, patience (theme) will be the name of the game, and trust your electronics. Especially during your pursuit of late season sockeye, you will see the fish on the meter before they

chase down your offering. When chasing late season sockeye, the more flash the better. Some people run 2 attractors and/or run a dummy off their downrigger ball. Other people bend their flashers to give them more wiggle and flash. Make sure you keep your gear clean; I don't think that the late season sockeye like the scent of yesterday's bait or scent oils. That said, make sure to use fresh bait. The 2013 sockeye bait you found in the back of the bait/beer fridge is not going to cut it.

Location is important in your pursuit of late season Baker Lake sockeye, although there are stock areas of the lake that consistently fish well. Areas like the Kulshan Loop, Maple Grove, Silver Creek, Noisy Creek and the Race Track along Baker Lake Road all reliably produce fish.

The problem is each of those areas will also have a healthy aluminum hatch. With all the gear dangling in front of their noses, the fish may just ignore it. In my experience it pays to go look for fish. Many times, I find schools of willing biters in shallow water. Often, after a slow morning I have just flatlined gear in shallower areas of the lake and picked off limits in one or two passes.

FISH ON THE METER! Now what? Typically, a "0" size 50/50, chrome or pearl dodger is the backbone of the setup. While you can catch fish on tandem red, black or blue hooks the fishiest gear includes small spinner blades, Smiley Blades or Wiggle Hoochie inserts. Thinking outside of the box also has advantages. Sometimes the fish just don't want the standard gear.

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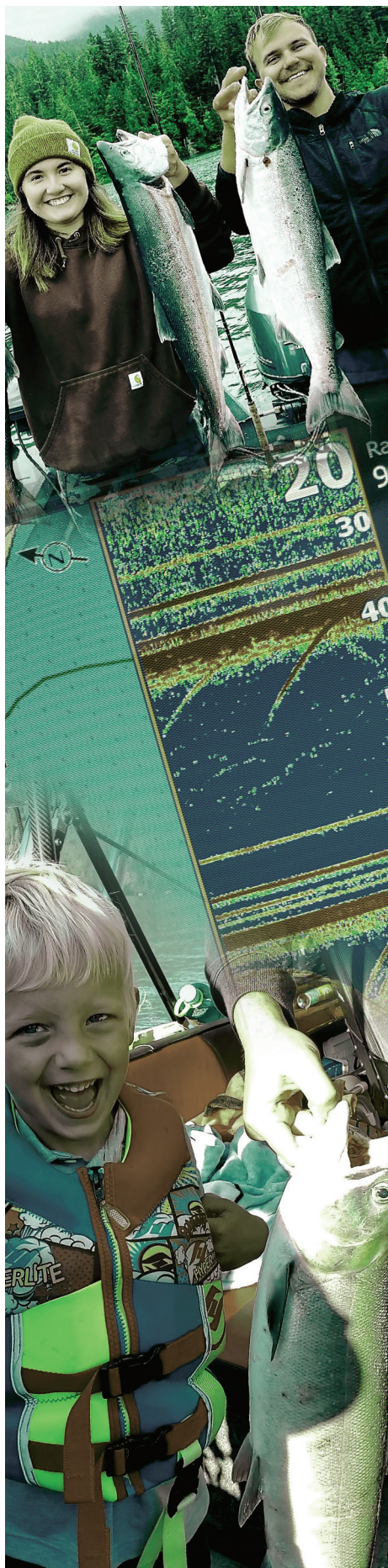


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We have had success using the kokanee size Brad's Cut Plug lures, Coho Killers with an extra bend in them, kokanee/sockeye flies, and Brad's Wee Warts. Start with the basics, a "O" dodger and a bare 3/0 red hook, and then be prepared to make changes until you are consistently catching fish.

Downriggers are the way to go with this fishery, but dropper rigs rack up many of the fish caught at Baker Lake. When running downriggers, beware, the lake is uncharted and there are many stumps, old structures and who knows what else to snag you downrigger ball on. If using downriggers, be alert and be prepared to part company with your downrigger ball (does your pre-trip planning include an extra downrigger ball?). Safety first, especially if fishing out of a shallow freeboard skiff, kayak, or inflatable. A 10-pound hunk of lead is not worth losing your boat or giving your boat mate unexpected swim lessons. Try to maintain your trolling speed at .8-1.2 MPH, and we have found that 5-10' setbacks from your downrigger clip are all that are required.

Another thought and in my mind a gem of an opportunity. Late in the season these fish form tight schools and cruise around on the flats where the Baker River flows into Baker Lake. There are several underwater springs in the area and the fish seem to be staging for the spawn. With caution you can slowly motor (or row) into the area, find a pocket of fish and drop a dead weight anchor. There will be a ton of logs and woody debris so don't use any kind of pronged or claw anchor. An old pile of chain or bucket of cement is perfect.

Caution: do not come into this area of the lake on plane or even any faster than at idle. Depending on lake level there are numerous stumps and trees just waiting to meet your prop. Why go to all this effort? Glad that you asked...

With a little luck and an adventurous spirit, you can set yourself up to sight fish sockeye with a fly rod. Let me tell you it is an absolute hoot, and once you have it dialed in, you'll be a serf to the great sockeye gods. You'll go to sleep dreaming about watching your line snap tight as the water seems to boil around it and wake up in a sweat still dreaming about your airborne quarry.

I've said this before; Baker Lake sockeye are the best eating fish in the state. To preserve their quality, bleed and ice your catch immediately. If you're camping, gut the fish and pack the body cavity with ice, layer the fish in ice with a handful of rock salt evenly scattered around on top of the ice. It is best to use an ice chest that is dedicated to your prize catch. Leave the ice chest drain plugs out. This will prevent your catch from sitting in an ice chest ½ full of cold, very slimy sockeye sludge.

So, those are the late season basics; I wish you luck and an enjoyable trip to Baker Lake. Please be respectful of the opportunity to fish Baker System sockeye. This fishery is closely monitored and there will be multiple game wardens, WDFW, and Sheriff Department personnel conducting on the water checks. If there is widespread abuse, they will close the fishery. Be courteous, know the regulations, limits, and gently release any Dolly Varden trout caught.



Last year Rob and I hooked up with NW Guide Toby Wyatt of Reel Time Fishing and his wife Cindy in Cabo San Lucas.

We jumped at the opportunity to Snowbird down to Mexico during the cold season to check out what Reel Time Fishing had been developing in Cabo.

Toby has homed in his local captains, resorts luxury transportation and connections. His team was there to keep us on course, happy, walk us through the ins and outs of Cabo, and get us in the fish. Knowing Toby was in our corner gave us security and peace of mind when traveling abroad.

We set out to Cabo at the beginning of December. We booked our airfare and reserved our dates with Reel Time synchronously with a group of industry friends from Spokane 6 months prior alongside our Passports. Along the ride was well known Chef and Restaurateur Adam Hegsted, Chef Aaron Fish and his wife Miranda, Creative Director Jason Olsen and his wife Heather and Rob and Me. Traveling with a group was made easy with Toby's coaching us along the way.

We arrived in Cabo together and set out through customs for our transport that had been coordinated by Reel Time Fishing.

We were greeted by a black Escalade and a host that I can only describe as our personal navigator, Toby's eyes and ears on the ground. We were picked up from the airport in style and dropped off at our all-inclusive resort, the Rio Santa Fe. Toby's transport continued to be a holler away should the need arise for anything.

The resort was incredible. We did not want nor need anything. Drinks and food were included in our all-inclusive package. The many restaurants, entertainment and pools left nothing to be desired. Our refrigerator was stocked in our room and there was tequila on tap.



The fishing was outstanding! Rob and I caught our first Marlin's and Cindy caught a Dorado! The fight Rob and I had with our Marlin's was a fight of adrenaline that is unparalleled in NW waters. Nothing can prepare you for it. It is extraordinary and definitely bucket list worthy!

We had a cooler full of Mahi Mahi and Tuna to take home. We released the Marlins as most locals do. The crew took care of the cleaning and hooked us up with a processor to get our fish prepared for transport on the plane.

We filmed a Crave TV episode with Chef Adam Hegsted and Chef Aaron Fish. Seeing NW Chefs prepare fish with Cabo ingredients was truly impressive! We spent a day by the pool. We Shopped local shops and took a leisurely boat taxi across the bay. We took a day trip out to the countryside for a day of four wheeling through the desert.

"It's a great way to break up the time on the water. There is something about cruising through the Mexican desert that makes you feel alive." -Jason Olsen

had a chance to sit down with Jason Olsen and talked shop about his Cabo experience with Reel Time Fishing in Cabo

INTERVIEW

JASON

How was fishing with Toby's team?

"Second to none! Nothing compares to that whole trip. It's a lot of buildup.

And it doesn't disappoint. As far as going out on the boat with Pepe, knowing he was linked to

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Toby, I felt comfortable and safe knowing I was in good hands. Toby has seasoned dudes, and he has a standard for bringing people on. I would definitely go again at the drop of a dime. I was impressed with Pepe. He knew exactly what to do and where to go. He had an innate instinct on where to go to catch the fish and had electronics to get us on the fish. Also, having someone to show us around and be our wheels on the ground, saved us money and we did it in style."

What kind of fish did you catch?

"Yellow Fin Tuna, mostly. We went out from about 5 am and by 11 am we caught 10 Tuna."

What was the fight like?

"A lot harder than freshwater fish. High energy. At one point I had to strap myself into the chair."

Tell me about the flags.

"So the whole experience coming back to the dock was pretty great. After we caught the fish, Pepe had me hang up these flags I wasn't sure what for.

The minute we pulled into the marina, it was a bit of a parade. A bragging parade.

Everyone could see what kind of fish we caught and how many from the amount of flags that were flying on our boat. It was pretty great to showboat our way into the Marina."

Tell me about the food.

"The resort accommodations and restaurants were amazing! The experience of going out in the morning and coming back and having my fish prepared by a local chef, was like no other. My liver hurt when I came home."

Words of wisdom from Jason

"Take the seasickness patch, don't be a hero! Go with a guide that is credible. Toby's network takes the worry out of travel. Listen to Toby and you will do just fine. Use his knowledge and connections. The culture and being able to start my fishing endeavors at such a high caliber was an amazing opportunity."

TOBY

"One thing we do is we babysit our guests. We transport them from the airport to the resort to fishing and back. We are like a coach in your corner."

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WRITTEN BY TOBY WYATT



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It was a foggy, rain-soaked day in King Salmon. One crusty looking grumpy guy in hip boots was clearly the ringmaster of what appeared to be a five-ring circus happening in front of me. An entire fleet of float planes were tied off to a massive wooden dock on the Naknek River. Dormant. Grounded due to the fog that soaked in right down to my boots. Pilots were yelling at dock hands to get the planes loaded and the ringmaster just looked on with what seemed like surly disgust. Apparently, the tower was going to give special clearance for a few airplanes to fly. This fleet had been sitting for a couple days and everyone was anxious to make the planes do their job. It wasn't a time to be late to the party. I sat there with my head down, staying out of the way, and waiting to be told to load up.

I didn't know a soul. I didn't have any friends there. No family. No one. I was as alone as alone could be. The crusty looking grumpy ringmaster just called me "the kid from the south." He finally came over to me and said "well kid, looks like I'm gonna have to fly you out to the Branch. Go ahead and load up in that 206 down there. I will be there in a minute." I didn't have the guts to ask what a 206 was. I knew it was an airplane but obviously it was a different airplane than the others. I knew that he knew I didn't know but, I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of delivering more surliness my way. Instead, I asked the dock hand that was getting yelled at the most. He was glad to load my two duffel bags and backpack in the right airplane. When the ringmaster returned, I quickly loaded up per instruction and that was it. Off to the Branch.

Just like I had done it a hundred times.

That was not only my first day in Bristol Bay but, it was my first day in Alaska. Almost 20 years ago now. I had no clue how much it would change my entire life. As the years and seasons rolled on, the grumpy ringmaster stopped referring to me as "that kid from the south." I earned my spot in the Bristol Bay community and made friends. In later years as my interest in aviation grew, the ringmaster would message me asking about weather conditions at my location. I became a part of an inner circle that once again, changed my life forever. I am grateful for all of it.

By the time I started working in Alaska, I was no stranger to the duffel bag life. Living out of a couple of bags and a backpack was normal for me.

I had just never done it in a location as remote as Bristol Bay. I read somewhere once that people who go to Alaska for work are either running from something, looking for something, or they are just too stupid to get a job anywhere else. I was all three. Maybe not too stupid to work somewhere else, but I was checking boxes on my resume. I needed Alaska experience to go where I really wanted to go. Trouble was that I had inadvertently fallen in love with Bristol Bay. She turned out to be the dirtiest mistress a fishing guide could have. The one that I couldn't walk away from. The one that will kill you if you stay too long and ruin you if you leave too early. Bristol Bay has a way of doing both, no matter what you do.

If someone wanted to know exactly which part of Bristol Bay kept me returning for almost two decades, my answer would be "all of it." Alaska is, without a doubt, the biggest adventure anyone can have. I'm sure somewhere in Siberia there is a bigger adventure but none of us are going there to do it any time soon. At least in my lifetime it seems that will be the case. Alaska has a certain captivating quality which speaks to those who are in fact, running, looking, or lost. Fishing fixes most everything and float planes fix everything else. Alaska has that in spades.

But honestly, as I sit here today trying to find a way to put in words that justly convey my experiences, the one thing that keeps coming to mind is the salmon migration. I lived for the days of hunting fresh, dime bright, chrome salmon straight in from the bay. No matter if I was up late studying weather

patterns and maps trying to find a way to fly or if I was running a jet boat 50 miles one way down river to tidewater, it was the same rush. The satisfaction of watching waves of fish push a wake while migrating upriver, just as they have done for thousands of years. I lived for it. Dreamed about it. It's the only thing I miss. This is the first summer in so many years that I have not been there for the migration. A couple nights ago, I dreamed about it. I was in the hip deep tidewater of the lower Branch. Fishing with my favorite 14' spey rod. Chrome kings were streaming by, pushing wake. The tides were right, the skies were overcast and there was just enough wind to keep the mosquitoes at bay. Life was perfect.

In my dream, I just stood there watching the wakes push upriver. Not fishing, not casting. Just puffing on a cigar and watching the whole thing happen. The dream was clearly a ridiculous romanticized abomination. Probably forced into my thoughts subliminally by some social media algorithm that doesn't really want people to fish, only act like they fish. Anyone that knows me knows that I can't smoke. It makes me deathly ill the next day. Worse than a hangover. I wish I could smoke cigars. It looks really cool. Most importantly though, the same people that know I can't smoke also know that if I'm breathing and capable of standing in the lower Branch, there is absolutely no chance I am not gonna swing for kings on a fresh high tide. No chance. Not now, not ever. It's the one thing that will bring me out of retirement. Maybe next season.....

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LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT

BY MATT CAREY

As outdoorsmen, we have a duty to continue to cultivate the resources that are our land and water. How many times have you pulled into a boat launch and seen it torn to shreds? Concrete half off the ramp, rope handrails cut and laying lifeless, no longer serving their purpose. What about the campsite with half ripped apart beer cases, food scattered around, and dog poop on walking paths? One of my personal favorites is seeing trash thrown in the firepit. It's one thing if the stuff thrown into the firepit can burn up (I'm plenty guilty of that), it's another when the material should've been disposed of properly. The old adage of "pack it in and pack it out" is simple in speech and at times aggravating in action. My college football coach had a saying, "do what you are supposed to do, when you are supposed to do it, and do it that way every time". The lens in which that quote was said was more along the lines of eat right, study your playbook, and lift hard, but

the message applies across the board.

This isn't meant to be a tirade against littering (not that I'm pro-littering - there is a Seinfeld skit somewhere about this I'm sure) or some kind of political statement. Rather, just an observation from a summer that I'm sure many of you shared. Time with friends and family outside. Some of us are lucky enough to have boats to get out on the water. Others may hike up into the mountains for some serenity and isolation. Then, for a brief moment, you realize the person there before didn't care enough to keep the place clean. It probably doesn't consume much of your brainpower or ruin the weekend, but it's enough to make you roll your eyes and sigh. Those are the kind of simple things we can all do to help one another continue to enjoy these shared spaces.

Another element that should be considered, particularly for those hunters among us, is the consideration of land water

access. Familiarizing yourself with the public vs private land, access points, and limits on how many people can utilize certain access points are all equally important and part of our duty as conservationists. I remember during the last hunting season being continuously peppered by advertisements from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) about the importance of seeking permission for type II block management access (BMA). It certainly didn't hurt that the advertisement featured a cameo from MeatEater star Ryan Callaghan. A quick sidebar for those who aren't in the know - Block Management in the state of Montana is a partnership between private land owners and FWP to grant access to hunters on private land, sometimes adjacent to public land. Type I BMA allows hunters to sign in on a card for hunting permission on private lands; you simply show up, fill out a card, and go hunt. Type II BMA often requires a reservation and is subject to availability from

the land owner. Examples might be limiting the number of hunters in a day, hunting parties in a day, or what type of game is being hunted. The word partnership isn't used by mistake. It takes action on all parties involved to maintain access to these hunting areas. The land owner to continue to be willing to allow hunters on the land, MT FWP to facilitate the opportunity for hunters, and hunters to respect the land and do their part to make sure their presence is continually welcomed. Leaving behind shell casings, wrappers from eaten protein bars, or other garbage is a quick way to find our access to otherwise great areas suddenly restricted. Maybe you don't own 1,500 acres of land but instead a 1,500 square foot home. Would you be

willing to invite back a stranger who tracked mud all along your carpets? Even worse, how about a buddy watching some football at your place who stains your couch with buffalo chicken wing fingers rather than wiping his hands. Why would we expect those land owners to welcome us back if we're doing the equivalent?

Let's continue to work together to make sure we can enjoy the outdoors we all know and love. It doesn't take much to clean up that last bit of trash, keep debris and clutter out of the community that should be enjoyed by all and keep shared areas like boat launches in working condition. If not for you and I, how about for our kids who hopefully enjoy these hobbies, and sometimes obsessions, as much as us.

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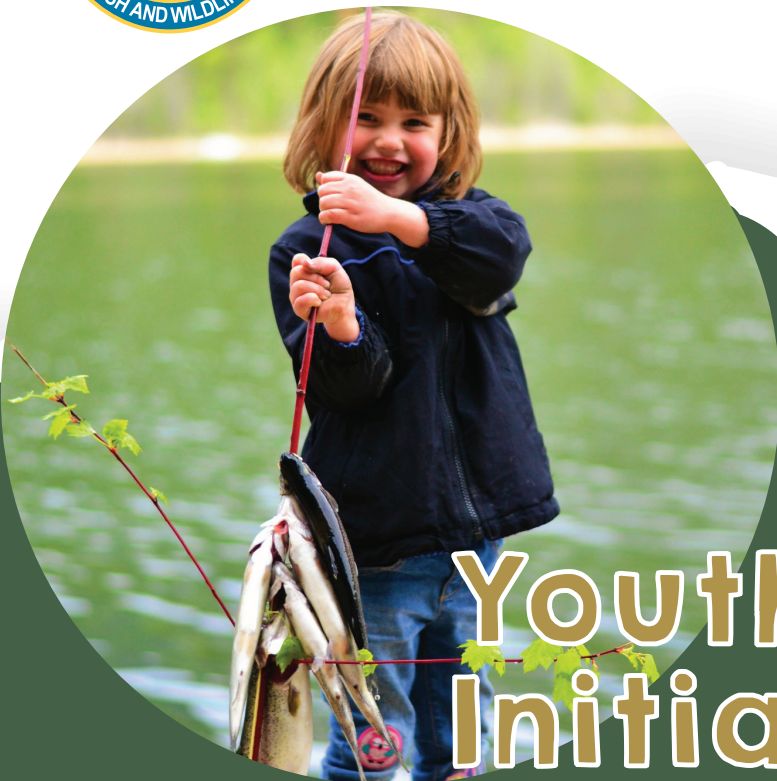
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A slight westerly wind nudged the port-side of my 14' Smokercraft, sending me into a silent and gentle drift through an endless sea of lily pads. It was a quiet approach, ideal for sneaking up on unsuspecting prey, yet the piercing glare of the setting sun reflecting off the water rendered my eyes almost completely useless. Through a squinting gaze, I struggled to make out what looked like a slight ripple in the water, followed by a dorsal fin breaching the surface. Drawing back on my bow I prepared for what would not only be my last shot of the evening, but possibly the biggest common carp I've ever taken with a bow. A twang from the string pierced the silence, and at a 50 lb. draw weight the arrow pounded through the water, gliding right over the top of the fish. A near miss, and only one of many that I will experience when attempting to land carp through arguably one of the most difficult methods of fishing.

Bowfishing for carp is the *crème de la crème* of outdoor activities for those who have an affinity for both fishing and hunting. It combines two beloved pastimes in a way that is both unique and

challenging, plus, it fulfills that nagging itch that plagues most hunters this time of year as they eagerly await fall hunting season. Just like fishing with a rod and reel, bowfishing is a game of patience. The beauty of bowfishing however, is that instead of sitting and waiting while you troll your rig under the water or wait for a bit of movement at the tip of your rod, you instead get to spend your time deeply focused as your ears are tuned into the sounds of thrashing water, or carp feeding at the surface. You're in constant engagement as you scan the water looking for slight movements in the vegetation, or for fish jumping or flapping at the surface, or better yet, for a fish swimming within shooting range.

Aside from the large doses of adrenaline that are part and parcel to bowfishing, those who choose this method of taking on common carp also get the added benefit of taking part in lake and river ecosystem restoration. Though carp were introduced by well-intended folks, they are classified by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife as an aquatic invasive species.

These fish are highly fecund; with

females laying up to 300,000 eggs per spring. Their ferocious appetites result in the removal of beneficial vegetation that would otherwise provide viable spawning habitat for native fish, they increase the amount of suspended solids in the water, causing increased turbidity, and they have been known to have a negative impact on phytoplankton production. Not only is the removal of common carp encouraged in Washington state, its supported to the extent that the WDFW does not require anglers to have a fishing license to catch or shoot them.

Looking to get into bowfishing for carp? If you're already an archery hunter, then you're over halfway there. For under 200 dollars, (at the time I write this) compound bows can be converted for bowfishing with the addition of a bottle reel, an arrow holder, pronged arrows, and some safety slides to prevent fishing line mishaps. Bottle reels are often preferred over spinning reels as they can hold heavier line for larger fish.

The downside is that they require you to hand-line in your catch as opposed to reeling.

If you own a high dollar bow, there's a good chance you don't want it getting banged and bloodied up in the boat, if that's the case then there are plenty of options out there for bows built specifically for bowfishing.

Technique

Bowfishing is essentially a spot and stalk hunt through the shallows. You can drift slowly in a boat, covering the ground as you move through the water, or you can anchor in a spot where the fish are present and actively feeding on vegetation. Another method is to simply wade in the water and get on your fish that way. Whether in a boat or on foot, the key difference between bowfishing and land hunting is that you won't be using sights when you aim at your target. Bowfishing, for the most part, is done with instinctive aiming. This means that you look at the target, aim, and shoot. This method takes a bit of practice to become proficient at, but most bow fishermen will find that instinctive shooting comes quite naturally and is a quick and effective way to get off shots.

Light refraction might be one of the biggest challenges you face when first getting started with bowfishing. When light traveling through air hits denser water, it slows down and bends. This causes the perceived image of the fish we see in the water to be above where the fish is actually located. Because of this, you have to aim low to get your shot on target. Like instinctive shooting, adjusting to light refraction takes practice, but as you miss time

and time again, you'll eventually find that sweet spot and gain an intuitive understanding of where the arrow needs to go.

Common carp can be found all over Washington state, but as with many Washington fisheries, east of the cascades seems to hold the bulk of the hotspots for these fish. Below is a list of lakes and ponds where you can find common carp throughout Washington State.

So, whether you're an archery hunter who's spent a little too much time day dreaming about the fall hunt and is just itching to go fling off some arrows, or if you're an angler who wants to both diversify and add excitement to their outdoor lifestyle, bowfishing for Washington common carp might be exactly what you're looking for.



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MESSAGE FROM THE FAMILY

Shane Michael Reynolds was a Reel Time fishing guide out of Orifino, Idaho. He and his lovely wife Gina and daughter Juliette were often seen hunting, hiking or long-range shooting together. To the day, there was no person Shane would rather hunt or fish with than Gina. They were an excellent team. Shane was a man of incredible physical strength, even surviving a grizzly bear attack in 2019. Despite that toughness he was never afraid to shower words of affection and devotion to his two favorite girls. His memory lives on through his wife Gina, and daughter Juliette Reynolds. To know Shane was to witness a man who left nothing undone. Please scan the QR code to help support the Reynolds family. A college fund has been set up in Juliette's name.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
CAPTAIN SHANE REYNOLDS



BOTTOM BOUNCING BASICS FOR **WALLEYE FISHING**

WRITTEN BY

MACK'S LURE PRO STAFF / LIP RIPPERS GUIDE SERVICE (S.D.) NICK HARRINGTON

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Bottom bouncers have become a staple of the walleye fishing industry. The reason they are so popular is because they are easy to run, versatile, and just downright catch fish. This setup is so simple, yet can have so many alterations and different styles of fishing. In this article, I'm going to go over the different types of systems we like to use in our guide operation.

RODS, REELS AND LINE

I like to use a stouter rod when bottom bouncing. This is because I like to run bigger bouncers and have a firm backbone when I set the hook. I favor a 6'6" to 7' medium-heavy rod with a fast- or moderation- action. The reason I favor these setups is because I still have a good feel for what is happening with my line, but I have a firm backbone for setting the hook and fighting a fish. For reels, I favor a larger spool baitcasting reel. Line counters are not critical for bottom bouncing, but if you are fishing with someone that has not bottom bounced much, it helps to make sure that the lines are set at the right depth. As far as line, I favor 8-12 lb. Berkley Fireline because of its no-stretch properties.

This allows me to feel every pebble that the bouncer ticks and even the slightest of bites. It's also strong for reeling in larger fish, especially with the heavy bottom bouncer. Many walleye anglers have turned to braid as a mainline and there's pros and cons to that when compared to monofilament. Mono, for instance, is less visible when I am fishing clear water. Also, if I'm fishing around a lot of snags, it's easier to break off if I do get snagged, allowing me to spend less time fighting a snag and enabling me to get rigged and back to fishing quicker. The braid, on the other hand, is much stronger and has better sensitivity, though the downside is that it's more visible and when the fish are finicky, it can deter bites.

BOTTOM BOUNCER SIZE SELECTION

For the most part, I prefer to run heavier bottom bouncers. When I am backtrolling, I like to run a 1.5 oz. bottom bouncer out of the front of the boat and 3 oz. bottom bouncers out of the back. This allows me to have my front rods let a little more line out and the back rods stay right below the boat. Additionally, this type of setup helps me spread my line and avoid tangles.

I have a perfect angle to bounce across all snags and I still get a firm hookset by using this setup, as well. If you're running a long and short rod system (long in the front, short in the back) you can get away with running all 2 to 3 oz. bottom bouncers. In this setup, use the lightest bottom bouncer to reach the bottom. For instance, in shallower water (30 feet or less) use all 2 oz. bouncers, whereas when in deeper water, you can switch all the rods to the 3 oz. bouncer.

BLADE SELECTION

I prefer two types of blades. Early in the season I like to use smaller blades. Occasionally, I'll use a Size 0 silver Colorado blade, but the majority of damage I do when fishing with a smaller blade is with a Mack's Lure Smile Blade. I really like the Smile Blade 0.8, as these are nice, compact profiles that adds a little bit of flash and vibration to your bait. This makes your presentation attractive, but doesn't steal the show. I love fishing these blades at slow speeds, but they are also extremely versatile at higher speeds, too. How I like to approach the rig early in the season is to have a size #2-#4 Aberdeen or Octopus hook with a single 5

mm. bead. Usually, either the plain setup like that is going to be the top option or simply sliding a Smile Blade 0.8 onto it will be the ticket.

As the season moves on, blades seem to be a bigger factor. Generally, what I will do is just put a different-colored blade on. If I have multiple anglers in the boat, I will keep on plain hook out or possible put out a size #2 Colorado blade. I will always keep my Smile Blades out, but as the summer progresses, I will be switching towards size #3 Colorado blades. I really like the metallic colors with these blades. Gold and silver are colors that I feel are pretty universal and baits I often have out when fishing a new body of water that I'm unfamiliar with. As far as Smile Blade colors go, my favorites are Pink Silver Tiger, Chartreuse Sparkle, Gold Sparkle and Silver Scale.

Towards the fall, I begin the transition to larger Colorado Blades (#3 and #5) and Smile Blade 1.5. This time of year, the bigger blades resemble the bigger prey species and many walleye are going to be chowing on them. The larger baits are also going to give off more flash and vibration and really be appealing, specially in dark and dingy conditions.

Many anglers are switching to crankbaits this time of year, but the large blades do tremendous work. Bottom bouncing is a very simple concept. This article outlined the basic setup, but when walleye anglers get their minds to work a simple concept can become very complex. This was all about laying the foundation for the basic bottom bouncing rig. Take these tips adopt your own strategies and surely you'll begin landing more walleye in no time.





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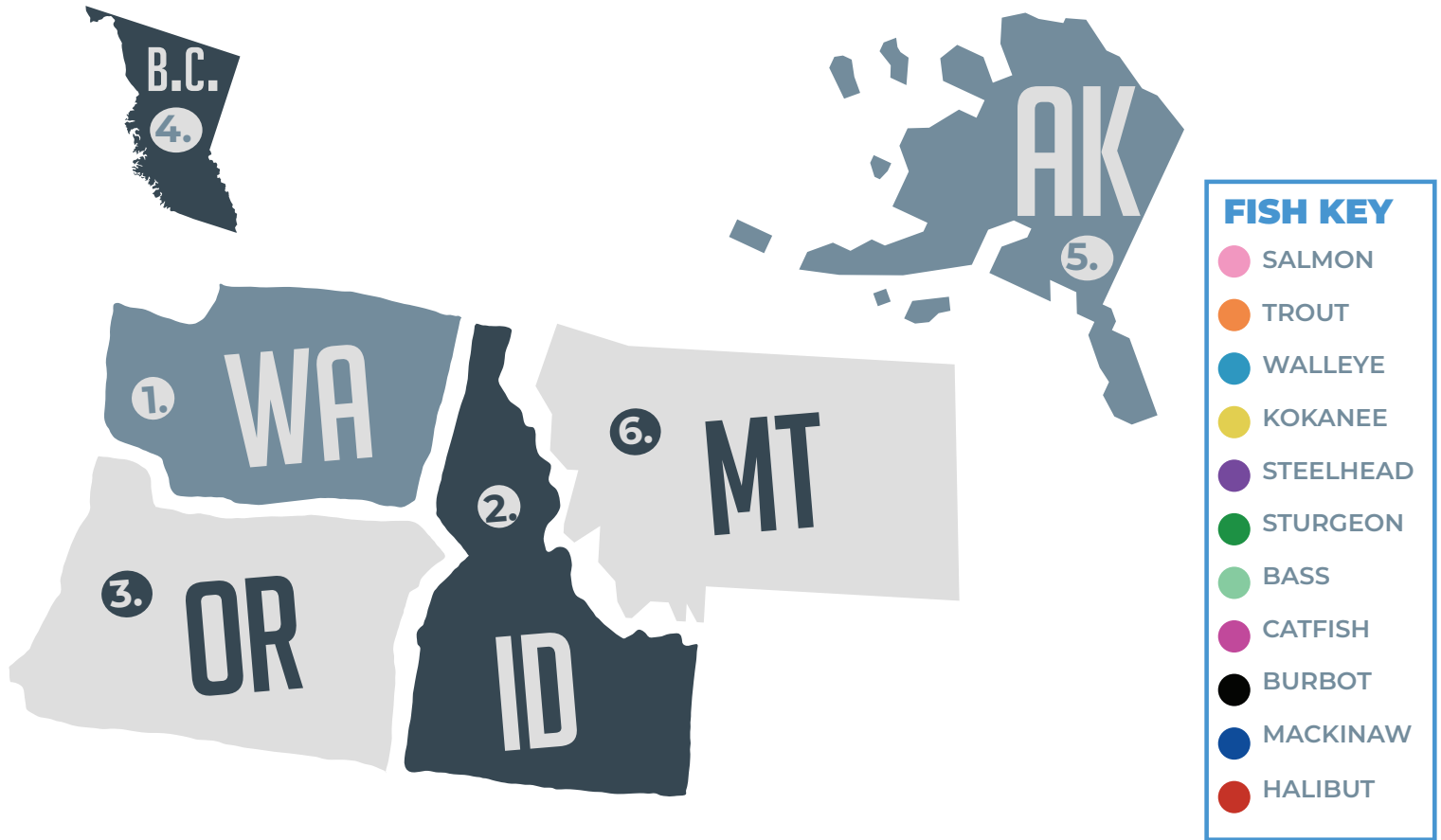
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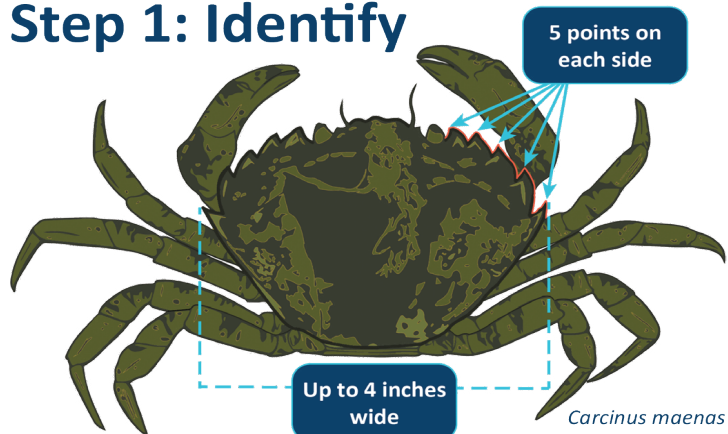


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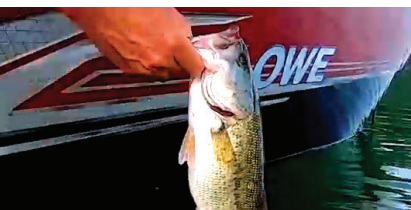
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