



REEL LIFE

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PHOTO BY MATT DUNCAN

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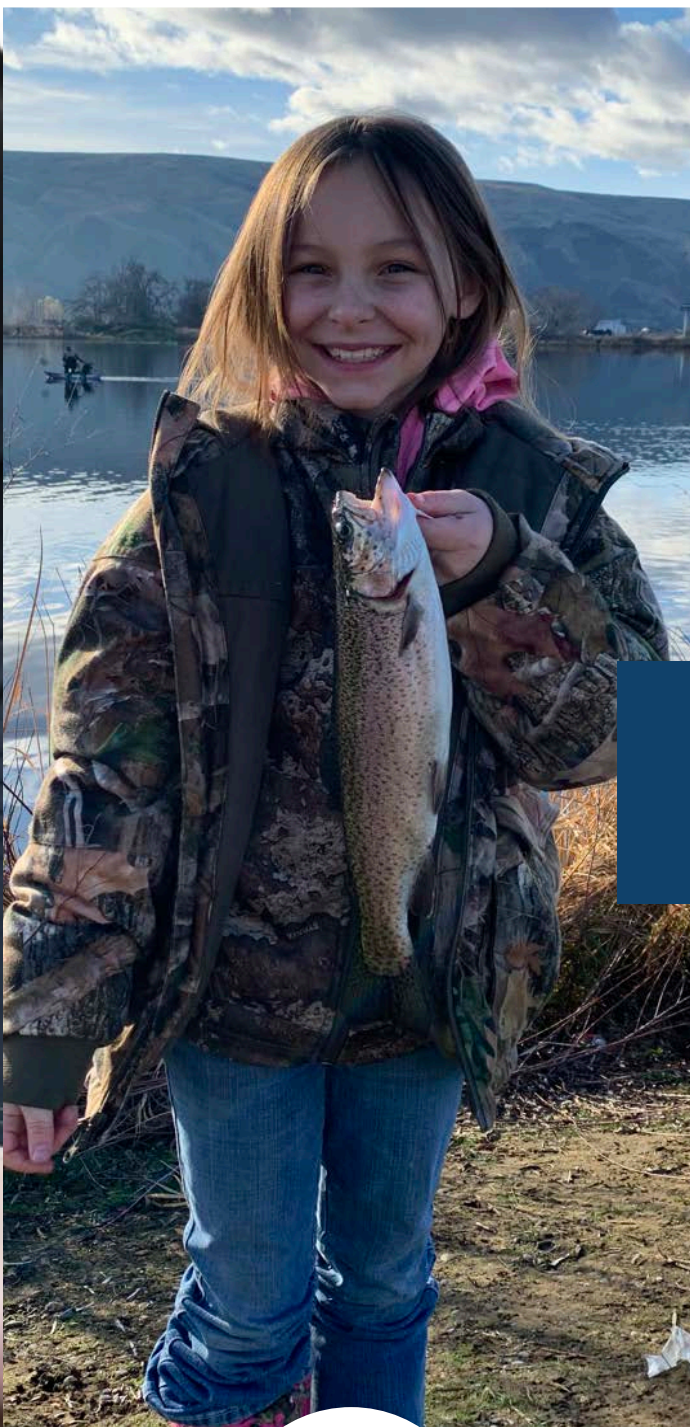
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EDITOR'S CORNER:

The days are growing ever shorter – sunrise when I leave for work and sunset as I return. The change of seasons is in the air but there are still some prime opportunities for fishing enthusiasts. As this issue hits the newsstands (and your In Box) chum salmon are finding their way back to streams and hatcheries throughout the Northwest. B run silvers will be filling up rivers, offering prime fishing (where open). And trout are fat and putting on the feed. In short, there are plenty of quarry to pursue this time of year. Our Nov-Dec edition of NW Reel Life has plenty of ideas and places to explore. And, since this will be the last issue before Christmas, we've included some of our favorite holiday gift ideas for you to get an early start on shopping. We here at NW Reel Life wish you all successful late fall/early winter fishing and we'll see you in 2023!



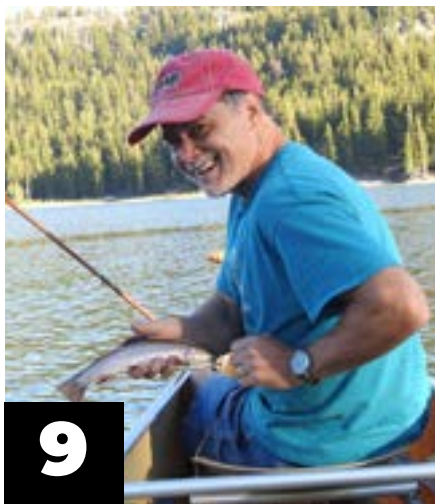
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A Digital Anglers LLC & Northwest Fishing Publication

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BY
HILLARY HOLMAN
#NWGoodEats

“Worth the cost. Great to share”

Winter is upon us, and ocean beaches will be opening throughout the season for Razor Clams. Rob and I spent last year in Ocean Shores to enter in the New Year with my cousin Lee Olson, out of Forks, old friends, Keith and Melissa Hudson and WDFW's Dan Ayers. After a cold and beautiful day clamming, we headed out looking for good food and a place to celebrate the new year. We landed at Bennet's Fish Shack just a hop away from the beach.

From outside, it was hard to miss the giant wreath hanging from the front monumental Bennet's Fish Shack sign. The inside was nicely decorated with beautiful holiday décor. The tables were made of copper and seasons greetings hung from every which way we looked.

It was New Year's so Rob and I started off with a couple Bloody Mary's and a Dungeness Crab Cocktail. **HOLY MOLY** was it good. This was a great way to start off the meal. *So good*, we repeated it on day 2. Next up was the entrees. I got the beer battered cod. It was incredible. The fish could not have been fresher. The batter was perfectly crunchy, and the portions were healthy. Rob got the wrap, and it too was delicious and sizable!

After a long day in the cold, this was the perfect place to kick up our heels and bring in the New Year. I now have a new standard on comparing Dungeness Crab Cocktails because of Bennet's. This place is the best I have found. When on the coast searching for Razor Clams, give Bennet's a try. ***I think you may like what you find.***





Measured in terms of people killed, the last year of World War II (1945) is regarded as the worst year in human history. On April 27, the day Italian partisans captured Mussolini, Gordon Vance caught two in the morning on flies and three in the evening on salmon eggs. The day after the U.S. dropped fire bombs on Tokyo, Gordon Vance dropped salmon eggs in Johnston Lake and caught six small ones. On August 9, the day a plutonium bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Gordon Vance was on Walterville Canal with a fly rod.

If you don't keep a flyfishing journal, maybe you should. It's a great way to remember good days on the water and figure out how to have more of them. But it can also be a link to the past when a son or daughter finds the journal years later.

Think about Gordon Vance. Remember him? No? Well, his family does.

When he was a little boy, his mother would give him a pail of water and a stick with a line and a bent pin. "He would sit in the kitchen for hours, waiting for a bite."

I spoke to Janice (Vance) McCargar after I received a package in the mail; she had found her father's fishing and hunting journals, kept in a three-ring binder, written in longhand.

Gordon Vance began to keep track of his fishing trips in 1931.

Picture a barefoot boy in a tiny kitchen in Missouri in the 19-teens. Picture him a bit bigger in dry-as-a-bone Arizona. "When my dad's family moved again to the McKenzie River in 1926, he thought he had died and gone to heaven." Gordon Vance was 16 when he moved to Oregon.

On May 15, 1932, he writes of fishing Walterville Canal and Cogswell Creek. He caught five on a blue quill body grey hackle and, that evening, on the McKenzie, caught eight "in a hurry on a yellow body deer hair fly."

Twenty-two years old in '32, Vance recorded 15 entries, on Leaburg Lake, the canal, Cogswell Creek, Horse Creek and the McKenzie.



In 1933, he fished 20 times and would have fished more, but in September, according to his notes, he picked up a Winchester Model 54 and spent a good deal of time in the woods.

"It was the fashion in those days to keep a journal," Janice said. People took the time to record thoughts and observations. Journaling helped the young man develop his craft on the water and in the woods. It was fun to think of the determination it took to drive to Diamond Lake, Miller Lake, Odell and Crescent in those days. Easy jaunts now, they were all-day rumbles along narrow timbered tracks in the 1940's and '50s.

In 1956, Vance fished Diamond Lake and wrote, "Don, Marion and I gave the Kamloops of the reborn lake an end of the season try. We caught 22 from 15 inches to 18 inches." He added, "A monofilament line is a must. Fish had been eating algae and tasted terrible." Monofilament: we take it for granted now, but it was the latest in fishing technology in the 1950s.

Some things haven't changed. On September 17, 1980, Vance fished Miller Lake. "Thirteen washboard miles from Chemult and up to 5,600 feet, the 550-acre lake is a beauty and if I had taken a fly rod could have been fun." A mayfly hatch was on and Vance had brought the wrong tackle. He ended the day with two small kokanee.

In 1990, the year he turned 80, Vance started with a March outing to Triangle Lake and recorded 27 trips on Cottage Grove Reservoir, Hills Creek Reservoir, Odell Lake, Cougar Reservoir, Green Peter, the Siuslaw and on his home waters, the McKenzie and Walterville Canal.

My friend, the noted outdoor writer Scott Haugen, makes his home in Walterville. He remembers Gordon Vance. And he remembers good days fishing the Walterville Canal.

"There used to be really nice cutthroat in it," Haugen said. "When I was in high school, lots of jack salmon used to run up one section. I caught steelhead out of it too."

It was interesting to look at my journals next to Vance's. I started my first notebook in 1980. I was in my teens and lived in southwest Washington and later in western Oregon; he would have been in his 70's when our paths crisscrossed each other's, fishing the North Umpqua and Central Oregon lakes. We have planted our waders on the same rocks and caught trout, steelhead, and salmon in the same holes.

Vance recorded his last entry November 30, 2000, after a day on Foster Reservoir. "Well, I ran out of luck at Foster or ran out of fishing knowledge." He did catch one salmon, but figured he could have caught more. "Should have had a fly rod or tried smaller spoons or something!"

Vance passed away a month later, at the age of 90, on Christmas Day, leaving a lifetime of outdoor experience in his wake and a journal for his family to remember him by.



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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Over the years I have come up with a system that makes finding the type of bait you want very quick and easy. The last thing you want to do is have to hunt through your whole tackle box looking for a lure when you should be spending that time fishing. I'm going to show you guys how I keep my tackle organized. It makes a huge difference in the amount of time it takes to find the right baits.

First off, the best way to store bass tackle is in the clear plastic 3700 boxes that are stored in a soft side box or in your boat's lockers. I also have separate boxes that I keep all my pike and musky gear in. I use a system for storing my tackle: first off, I put a hook guards on all my baits to control the hooks and keep them from tangling. I don't put more than 2 or 3 baits per slot max, and fit the slot to the size of the bait as best I can. The smaller the slot is, the less the bait moves around and gets scratched or marred. I try to keep crankbaits and jerkbaits in the box it came in if they aren't too much of a pain, as that keeps them in better shape and with fewer scratches.

Also, put a rust inhibitor in every box to keep your hooks from rusting and staining the baits. I first let my baits air dry on the rim of a cut off 5 gallon bucket with a hole in the middle that I put under my pedestal seat before I put them away. Plus, it makes a handy place to keep the baits you are using for the day if you switch up a lot like I do. Just cut the hole in the bottom of the bucket big enough to get the pedestal through.



Last, and most important, is how I label my boxes. I number each box from top to bottom, starting with topwater baits at 1, and deep diving cranks at the end. I number my boxes from 1 to 15, as that's how many boxes I need for all my hard baits. This makes it much easier to keep them in order. I put all my hard topwater baits in one box, like Whopper Poppers and Spooks, and work my way deeper in the water column with the different diving depth of the baits. So, the next box is all floater-diver Rapala minnow baits, then shallow running crankbaits, suspending jerkbaits, and so on, till you get to the deep diving cranks and baits that work on the bottom, like jigs and such. I group like baits



together and write on the lid of the box as much info as I can. If I know the name of the bait, I put that on the lid where the slot for that bait is at. The last info I put is what depth the lure should run at, and if it has a built-in rattle or not. I also write some info on the lures as well as on the lid where the lure is at in the box. If it is a floater diver, I write an "F" on the bottom of the bait just behind the lip with a black Sharpie. For suspending baits, I write an "S", and for

sinking baits, I put "SK". The more info you have about the bait, the better and the easier it will be for you to pick out baits and find the particular bait you are looking for. I do the same basic thing with all my soft baits, as well in a different soft-sided tackle box. I also group my soft bait into categories, like soft swimbaits in one box, ned rig baits in another, sinking worms all in a box together, and so on. If at all possible, it is best to keep your soft plastics in the bags they came in, as some plastic don't get along well with others and will turn into a gooey mess. Hope this will increase the time you spend actually fishing, and cut down on the time you are searching for a lure.

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RAZOR CLAM FORECAST



by **Hannah Pennebaker**
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It's no secret that last year's razor clam season was a banner year. Record number of clam diggers swarmed beaches, working hard to get their limits. 484,388 diggers showed up, harvesting 8,352,279 clams, over 120 total harvest days. That's a lot of razor clams! This was a welcome success after the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 seasons closed early due to COVID-19 and domoic acid, respectively. Thousands of eager razor clam diggers are wondering if this season will be as successful as the last. Dust off those razor clam guns and get your hip boots ready, because the forecast is looking promising! WDFW assessed razor clam populations throughout the summer and all had strong, harvestable populations except for at Kalaloch, which will be closed this year to allow recovery. Let's take a closer look at this year's forecast, and how WDFW determines annual razor clam harvests.

Razor clams have been enjoyed by millions of people over thousands of years. They are a valuable resource to hungry fishermen and local economies. WDFW estimated the fishery value to be \$71,689 last year. So how are these crucial resources managed? Since 1929, WDFW has managed the coastal razor clam harvest. It's a difficult job- they have to balance the demands of recreational fishermen with the rights of the tribes, all while keeping public safety in mind. Management strategies have been ever evolving. From 1929 to 1942, there was a year-round season, and a 36-clam limit. In 1943,

WDFW limited the season from March 1st to September 30th, and in 1960, the clam limit was reduced to 18. In 1973, the seasons were further reduced, and in 1974, the 15 clam limit we are familiar with today was implemented. In 2000, the seasons became much less set in stone and varied from October to May, depending on counts conducted through the "pumped area" method. In 2004, WDFW switched to the system still in use today, the "adjusted exploitation rate" method. Management strategies are ever evolving based on the increasing amounts of clam diggers every year, and changing oceanic conditions.

There are 3 pieces to the puzzle that WDFW must take into account before announcing razor clam digs: population counts, domoic acid levels, and tribal rights. The first piece of the puzzle is population counts. Each summer, WDFW conducts population counts at every beach: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, and Kalaloch. Based on these counts, they estimate the total number of clams measuring under 3 inches, and the total number of clams measuring over 3 inches. They allow a certain percentage of razor clam population over 3 inches to be harvested each year, in order to make sure the population stays sustainable for years to come. Up to 40% of razor clams 3 inches and above may be harvested every year for the population to remain sustainable. After every harvest, WDFW calculates the remaining TAC (total allowable harvest), and

sets further days based on that number. This way, poor tidal conditions and weather don't mean we get shorter seasons. Alternatively, if conditions are great and there are more harvesters than predicted, the season may close early on that beach. Population counts are closely monitored throughout the year to make sure this popular fishery will remain for years to come.

Before WDFW opens recreational harvesting, they must also determine whether the clams are safe to eat. WDFW's goals are not only to keep the resource around for years to come, but also to protect public health and safety. Unfortunately, clams are subject to accumulating marine toxins in their bodies which can make harvesters sick. Harmful algae blooms are naturally occurring, but concentrate in razor clam tissue. The most prevalent toxin is domoic acid, caused by consumption of marine plankton, called diatoms. Eating a razor clam that has high levels of domoic acid can cause nausea, dizziness, memory loss, and stroke-like symptoms. There is no antidote, and the toxin is not destroyed by cooking/freezing. WDFW carefully tests razor clam populations for domoic acid throughout the year, and will close seasons accordingly, even if TAC (total allowable catch) hasn't been met.

The final piece which WDFW must take into account is tribal fishing rights. Each year in August, WDFW discusses population estimates and domoic acid levels with the coastal tribes that have fishing rights on razor clam beaches, and comes up with the total allowable catch (TAC). 50% of the TAC goes to recreational fishermen and 50% goes to the tribes. The coastal tribes work with WDFW staff to come up with joint population assessments, and share their data together. Tribal seasons take place on different days than non-tribal seasons, and each group makes their own harvest estimates and enforces the rules themselves. Razor clams are a co-managed resource that

tribal and non-tribal stakeholders take very seriously.

Let's take a look in detail at this season's forecast. 27,000 clams are predicted to be harvested each open dig at Long Beach and Kalaloch, 20,000 at Twin Harbors, and 23,000 at Mocrocks. Long Beach has by far the largest TAC (total allowable catch) share at 5,865,490 clams, and Mocrocks has the smallest, at 1,964,732. Interestingly, the average size of clams is slightly smaller this year. Last year, they were 4.4 inches long, and this year they were 4.22 inches on average. Although the clams are a little smaller, there are plenty of them! Overall, the forecast looks promising. WDFW always tries to schedule razor clam digs on weekends at least once a month during the months of October through May. The WDFW director checks marine toxin levels and looks at the remaining TAC for the year before announcing that the harvest dates can proceed. Clam digs have been tentatively approved throughout November and December.

In an unprecedented move, WDFW increased the limits from 15 to 20 razor clams last year. Will it happen again this year? For now, keep an ear to the ground and always check your rules and regulations before heading out. Speaking of rules and regulations, it's always a good idea to brush up. Make sure each harvester has their own container to put clams in. Many sporting goods stores sell clam nets, which readily tie to your wading belt to keep your hands free for digging and holding flashlights. Remember that the first 15 clams dug must be kept, no matter the size or condition. We've all accidentally crunched clams while digging them, or dug up a tiny one, but they still must be retained as part of your 15-clam limit. That being said, there are plenty of clams out there to be had. It's shaping up to be a good year, so go out and get those razor clams!



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TOP CHUM TACTICS



WATCH NOW:
CHUM & COHO



BY JASON BROOKS

When it comes to salmon fishing, there are often two thoughts on the subject. The first being table fare, always trying to catch the freshest salmon that will eat the best, regardless of the recipe. Of course, sockeye are at the top of this list, along with bright coho, and ocean caught chinook. Last on that list is probably chum, with the exception of river run pinks, but since chums are an every-year fish, unlike the smaller but also low river system spawner the pink, the chum salmon is not always considered good eating quality. Even those in the commercial market change the name of ocean caught chum to entice the chef, and are called by their scientific nomenclature, the Keta salmon. There is no disguising a chum once it hits the barbecue. Even the ocean fish, which is very edible but lacking oils, taste bland. The second list for the salmon angler, and one that is just important, is catchability, or how easy it is to catch the fish, along with their fight. This is where the chum shines, and it is at the top of my list of salmon I like to catch and release in the fall.

I don't think there is a fish on the planet that is as aggressive as the chum salmon- well, okay, maybe a barracuda or northern pike, but for the Pacific salmon species, chums are at the top of the "get in my way and I will kill you" list. This makes for a fun day of catching chums, and the fact that they are the second largest salmon species means a hard-fought battle once you hook into these "dog" salmon. This means using stout gear, so before we start talking tactics, let's take a look at what rods, reels, and line you should use.

Chum fishing in the rivers often means catch and release, so it is best to use

gear that can handle these fish as well as get them back to the river quickly. You don't want to stress the fish so much that it dies after the fight, as that would defeat the purpose of allowing the fish to go back into the river to make more fish. Starting with the rod, think like a chinook angler and use a stout, medium-heavy to heavy action rod, often rated for 20 to 30-pound fish, or up to 5-ounce lures. If using a casting reel then you will be well equipped, as those reels have heavy drag systems, but for anglers who can't cast them without creating backlash, then a 4000 series or larger spinning reel is best. You can get away with a smaller reel like a 300 or

3000 series (depending on the manufacturer, as each use a different numbering system) but be sure to be ready to crank down the drag a bit. Mainline isn't much of an issue now that braid has become standard practice, but even still you will want to run a minimum of 30-pound line, with 40 and even 50 being preferred. Depending on which technique you use, if monofilament line is involved it is best to use 20-pound for leaders, as a minimum due to the teeth these dog salmon have once they start to enter the spawning phase of their lifecycle.

Now that you have an idea of what kind of gear is needed,



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coho and early winter steelhead or late summer steelhead are also caught in this technique. Several years ago, while fishing the Green River near Seattle, we were drifting down the river in my drift boat and floating bright colored jigs tipped with a piece of raw prawn. The float went under, and

to our surprise a late summer steelhead jumped out of the water. A bonus fish that was also released to swim and spawn another day.

When it comes to floating jigs, it is best to downsize them to a $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce as they fish a bit better under the bobber than heavier jigs. But if you do want to keep things simple, the $\frac{3}{8}$ -ounce twitching jig does work under a float. Regardless of twitching or float fishing, the jigs chums prefer bright colors. A white head with a cerise body is a good "go to", but so is chartreuse and black, as well as cerise and black, as the contrasting of bright and dark seems to entice the bite. Purple and pink are other top colors.

As for that piece of prawn on the jig- if you don't have prawns, or just forgot to grab some from the grocery store,

jigs take on scent really well. If using a marabou jig, then realize that the gels will ruin the action of the jig. Instead, use Pro-Cures water soluble products, with bloody tuna and sand shrimp being very popular for chum anglers. It is hard to beat prawns, and they are a cheap bait to buy. A handful of prawns cost a few dollars at the seafood counter at the local grocery store. You can fish them raw but another way to add contrast is to dye them with Bad Azz bait dye in purple, cerise, pink, or chartreuse. Keep in mind this dye will stain everything, so it is best to use a small amount and use disposable containers. Twitching jigs is another technique that will catch a lot of chums, as well as a coho or two that are still lingering in the river system. Here again, there are two schools of thought, the first being twitching to holding fish in deep holes and structure. There is one spot on the Satsop river in Southwest Washington that is consistent each year. My son and I try to venture to this river every November when the coho are still in the system and the chums are just arriving. This one spot is a deep water slough that sits just off of a bend in the river with strong current. Fish, both chums and coho, stack up here, and we break out the twitching rods. On one trip, we invited a friend who had just moved from

the technique or tactics used to catch these fish vary by type of water you will be fishing and even the crowds around you, as you don't want to be that one angler who decides to swing spoons when others around are float fishing. Regardless of which technique you do use, be sure to use one that will not only hook the fish legally (in the mouth) but also allow you to reel it in quickly, snap a photo, and then send the fish on its way.

Floating jigs tipped with a piece of prawn is one of the best techniques to catch chums. Not only is this an easy way to fish, but watching a float sink into the river while you set the hook is an adrenaline rush. What can seem like a mundane way to fish quickly turns into a frenzy of excitement. Best of all, it is simple, works anywhere fish are found, and not just chums, but

Texas and had never caught a salmon before. Chums are a great fish for these types of trips. My son Ryan cast a twitching jig into this backwater and showed our friend Chris how to twitch. Then Chris cast the line, and on the second twitch of his first ever cast for salmon, he hooked a huge buck. As the fish dove deep back into the hole, he looked at us and yelled, "this ain't trout fishing!". We hooked and landed several more fish that day, all on jigs, either floated or twitched.

Spinners need to be ranked as one of the top techniques for chums, as they catch a lot of fish. It is hard to describe to an angler who has never used spinners before what it is like to hook a chum on one. Casting out into a run and letting the spinner flutter and work its way across as you reel in, feeling the telltale "thump-thump" of the blade working, then, all of a sudden, the rod almost gets ripped out of your hands as a chum grabs the spinner and takes off. Again, use bright colors, such as a size 5 Blue Fox Vibrax with a chartreuse body and silver blade. Hot orange and pink also work really well.

Like spinners, the spoon bite can be a lot of fun. In Alaska, I don't think you will find an angler's tacklebox without a few pixie spoons in it. Gold body with a pink or red

center work well. Of course, Dardevle is synonymous with spoons, and the trusty red and white striped Dardevle works well, but so do bright greens, pinks, and reds. Spoon fishing is much like spinner fishing, except you do want some current with the spoons, where spinners can be cast out into deep holes and reeled in. Swinging spoons is just that- cast out and take up the slack, and then let the spoon swing across the river to holding or moving fish.

Lastly, big, gnarly chums like big, gnarly plugs. A MagLip 5.0, or a K15-Kwikfish in bright colors either being back bounced or just simply plunked will catch chums. You can elect to wrap the plugs or just use some Pro-Cure Super Gel in herring, anchovy, or garlic, as it will stick to the plugs very well. Back bouncing them down a deep hole is a log of fun and a great way to catch fish. If there is enough current, then pulling them in a traditional way also works well. It is a great technique for the newer angler if the person on the helm or oars knows how to pull plugs. Simply put them out, place the rod into the holder, and

then put your hands in your pockets. Wait until the rod loads up with a fish, and then put that drag on the reel to work.

Regardless of which technique you use, just remember that these fish need to go upriver to make more fish. Try to get the fish in quickly and then release it after you let it rest and rejuvenate. Some will argue with me that chums are good to eat, and to that I will remind readers; "to each their own". For me personally, I would rather stock my freezer with coho for the barbecue and catch chums for the fun. They are big, aggressive, and put up a heck of a fight, and that is all I need to put them at the top of the list as one of the most fun salmon to catch.



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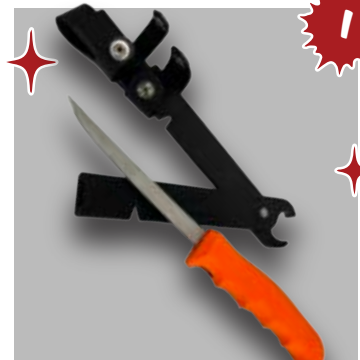
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NORTHWEST FISHING



Well, winter is around the corner and it's time to put the rods away and winterize the boat, right? NOT QUITE YET! Salmon season is indeed winding down, aside from some late season river opportunities, and winter steelhead is often a mystery, so many anglers don't know where to look for the next bite. If this is you, look no further than some fantastic winter trout fishing at multiple stocked lakes! Winter trout fishing is incredibly rewarding, and in many cases, produces some large trout that cut beautifully. There are many ways to chase these fish from shore or from the boat, and with a little research and timing, you are sure to be on the fish!

HOW TO PREPARE

To begin, let's look at the setups to use. Cold water temps have a lot of effect on fish, as they are a cold-blooded species. During this time, they are in energy consumption mode, with not a ton of energy to be spent moving around. Additionally, cold temps slow down fish metabolism. All this together means that when the fish feed, they are looking for an easy meal that does not require too much energy wasted in chasing it down. For this reason, small profile lures and stationary baits are often the best choice.

When fishing from shore, it is hard to beat the "stocked-trout standby", the Carolina rig! An egg sinker on the mainline with a 2-3-foot leader to a small hook, with an inflated nightcrawler or chunk of Powerbait, is an easy meal for a meandering trout to engulf. Another good option is a small spoon or spinner with a slim profile and wounded look. Lighter casting spinners and spoons can be worked slow through the water column and produce a very crippled look. They are a great way to cover water in new spots and find the fish.

From a boat, these methods work great as well, but trolling can be added to the mix. Small spoons and spinners tipped with a worm are always a good option. Trolling allows the angler to go to the fish. Compared to spring and summer, trolling a little



slower can be very effective. Many rainbow trout will sit low below the thermocline. Trolling past them just fast enough to get their attention but slow enough have them commit is the target.

WHERE TO GO

As with any fishing trip, the first thing to do is check the regulations. Many stocked trout lakes are seasonal, meaning they close at the end of October. If your lake is open, you are set to legally fish, but there may not be great fishing. Luckily for the angler, the WDFW publishes a list of recently stocked lakes that is updated weekly. Checking lakes in your area will give you the best idea of where and when to wet a line. The best time to catch stocked trout in the winter is directly after the stock. This is when the trout aren't quite acclimated to the new area, and they are the most aggressive. After a couple weeks in the lake, the fish will hunker down and be far less active compared to their first little bit in the new water. Knowing when the trout are stocked can be the difference in a couple bites and a nice limit on the stringer! During most of the winter months, the state stocks their "jumbo's", which are trout over 11lb, which usually cut fantastically.

FINISHING TOUCHES

As a local Western Washington Angler, I know a couple great lakes in my surrounding counties that are stocked in November, which give me just enough time to make some smoked trout dip for the Thanksgiving table. Nothing warms a day like a tight line on a cool river bank, sipping hot coffee, and enjoying some bank lunch. With a little research, a simple setup, and a couple of free hours, you can be knee deep in some delicious trout! Just like the spring, ultralight trout setups, light monofilament line, some extra hooks, and a couple of weights, and you are set on terminal tackle. Then add some jars of Powerbait, a few lures, and a stringer, and you will be ready to hit the water. As always, be prepared for the weather!

THE OUTDOORS ROUNDUP



John Kruse
northwesternoutdoors.com and
americaoutdoorsradio.com

It's all fun and games in September and October as the foliage turns scarlet and gold. The fish put on the feed bag, biting readily. Then, November and December arrive, the leaves turn brown, tree branches become empty, and catching fish gets more challenging. Having said that, there are still some great places to catch fish in Eastern Washington in the late fall and early winter. Here's a few recommendations:

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE:

You know what they say, "the river never sleeps", and neither do the fishing opportunities in the Gorge. At this time of year, the coho salmon bite is waning, but the walleye bite near John Day Dam, as well as catch and release sturgeon fishing, remains strong. If you are looking for current

information, drop by Gorge Outfitters Supply in Rufus, Oregon.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER:

It's a long drive, but this picturesque river is worth it. Starting in November, good numbers of summer steelhead show up here, and fortunately, there is a good amount of public access for you to get at them, from Highway 129 at Boggan's Oasis to Troy, Oregon. There is also some access near the mouth of the Grande Ronde, where it flows into the Snake River. The steelhead run is much better than last year and anglers should be in for decent fishing from the bank, or from a raft or drift boat. Spinners, spoons, and small jigs fished under floats all work well here. Barbless hooks are required. Check the regulations for additional information.

POTHOLES RESERVOIR:

The walleye bite continues well into December, and trout fishing is an option too! Try trolling near Medicare Beach or off the mouth of Frenchman's Wasteway for quality size rainbow trout. Try off the face of the sand dunes, the mouth of Crab Creek, or in the Lind Coulee for walleye at this time of year. Trolling a spinner/worm harness behind a bottom bouncer weight works well in November, but as the water continues to cool, switch to blade baits for the walleye.

ROSES LAKE:

Located near Manson, this 132-acre lake offers very good trout fishing during the fall and winter. There is a public access area on the south end of the lake, with some room to spread out for anglers fishing from shore. Once the lake freezes over, it becomes an ice fishing destination not only for trout but also for

perch, which are found in good numbers here. Pro tip? After you are done fishing, have breakfast or lunch at the nearby Blueberry Hills Restaurant. It will make the whole trip worthwhile even if you don't catch a thing!

LONG LAKE:

I was introduced to this lake when I was invited by Mack's Lure President Bob Schmidt to fish with him and a couple of other friends on board Steve Morris's boat, the man who owns SJM Guide Service. This lake is located just northeast of Spokane. Morris explained this fishery has a limited window because the boat launches become unusable by mid-December. Our late November fishing trip was fantastic with a

very quick limit of chunky, 12-to-14-inch rainbow trout. If you have never fished here before I would recommend using a guide like Steve. His website is www.sjmguideservice.com

RUFUS WOODS RESERVOIR:

This impoundment between Chief Joseph Dam in Bridgeport and Grand Coulee Dam is a long time draw for anglers going after the big triploid trout found in this reservoir. In the past, most of the triploids caught here were escapees reeled in near the net pens they were raised in on the reservoir. Now, the Colville Tribe raises triploid trout in a hatchery

and releases them directly into the reservoir. If you are fishing on tribal land, you will need a permit to do so, in addition to your fishing license. While many anglers take their boats to the areas just outside the net pens, bank anglers can also have success on tribal land by the net pens, as well as from shore at Bridgeport State Park, Brandt's Landing, and the Willow Flats Recreation Area near Chief Joseph Dam. Oh, and if the triploid trout aren't biting? Try trolling or jigging for walleye, there are a bunch of them here.

LAKE ROOSEVELT:

Last but definitely not least, this 151-mile-long impoundment of the Columbia River stretching from Coulee Dam to Canada offers very good fishing during the winter months for quality rainbow trout and kokanee, both of which average 16 to 20 inches in size on a good year, with some fish even bigger than that. Walleye fishing is also very good here during the cool weather months, and they can get big (a walleye weighing nearly 12 pounds was caught this past March). Anglers tend to fish around Keller, the mouth of the Spokane River, or by Kettle Falls. The kokanee are usually found in the lower end of the lake in the winter. If you want the latest fishing information about Lake Roosevelt, stop by Clark's All-Sports in Colville.

NOV-DEC 2022 | 29



LATE SEASON ON ALASKA'S KENAI PENINSULA



BY
CAPTAIN CHAD BRYSON



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COVER STORY

Alaska's Kenai Peninsula and its spectacular sport fishing opportunities is a far cry from being a worldly secret. Every summer thousands of visitors travel to the Great Land in the pursuit of filling fish boxes with some of the cleanest and tastiest sockeye, king and silver salmon on the planet. This occurrence has been happening for decades. In most fishing circles going to the Kenai during the summer migratory runs of salmon would even almost be considered "old hat." In fact, I myself even turned a cold shoulder to it. As a veteran Bristol Bay guide, I couldn't imagine any good reason at all to punish myself, or anyone else for that matter, by enduring the crowds of summer on the Kenai Peninsula. It just didn't seem worth it. Sure the fishing was incredible but, at the price of standing in line either by boat or by foot next to hundreds of my "brothers in arms", none of which I knew well enough to be comfortable in those proximities. That was until at the suggestion of a friend to give the late fall steelhead fishing a try. In an effort to make my re-entry to society easier, I gave it a shot. I figured the worst thing that could happen is that I wouldn't have fun and I would hate the crowds. After the first day, I knew the worst wasn't going to happen and that I had found a new place/time to fish steelhead.



That first trip was in early October. I fished the Anchor and Kasilof rivers. There were plenty of steelhead willing to eat dead drifted beads as well as swung flies. The weather was equally as pleasant as the number of anglers were few. It was almost too good to be true. How could it be that this Shangri-La of Alaska steelheading could still exist? Furthermore, how long into fall would the fishing sustain? AKA- How long could I stay and do this every single day until the rivers froze or spent every dollar I had earned over the summer? Which ever came first, I was hell bent to find out.

That year I think I stayed until the third week of October. It was all I could afford both financially and personally. Kids, dogs, and girlfriends have this thing about me being away from home for extended periods of time. Especially the dogs. I was kicking and screaming the whole way to the airport. Fishing at that time was nothing short of remarkable and I didn't want to leave. Some of the locals I met during my abode on the peninsula encouraged me to not even come back the following year until November 1, as long as the temps held out. At first I wasn't sure if this was a carefully plotted ruse just so I wouldn't be there to "fish their water"


or if it was a genuine act of rare angling kindness. After all, anglers are known for their sometimes harmlessly nefarious actions to keep the local water local. That wasn't the case here. This was a genuine act of kindness and sharing amongst steelheaders in pursuit of one common goal. I shouldn't have been surprised. After all, that is the Alaska way.

In the years that followed, I fished the Kenai Peninsula later and later. As long as the weather and temps held out, the steelhead were there but, without the crowds of anglers. November/December in Alaska can be very, very cold with potential of more cold brutality at any given moment. This keeps most fair-weather steelheaders away. Fellow Bristol Bay guide and lifelong Kenai guide Matt Duncan fishes easily into November and some years well into December with an occasional January boat launch. Growing up in Anchorage gives him, and other local resident guides, the hands down advantage when it comes to Kenai conditions. Mike Brown at Mossy's Fly Shop in Anchorage is also a great source of information regarding Kenai fisheries.

When I'm planning a late season Kenai Steelhead trip, either for myself or others, I try to take into consideration that on a five day trip, at least one of those days is going to be a cribbage day. Maybe even two days. Weather can blow in and blow out just that fast. As long as you know the potential is there, it won't be that big a deal. There are numerous Airbnb, VRBO and local cabin rentals on the lower Kenai Peninsula that will accommodate a world championship cribbage tournament should the need arise. While you are fishing, plan accordingly on how you dress. I wear boot foot waders and full synthetic layers no matter if I am in a boat or walking in to wade fish. And don't even think about wearing anything but a quality rain jacket. A friend joined me on a November Kenai steelhead adventure once that only brought a "brand x" wind breaker that was water resistant. After about 90 minutes our fishing day morphed into an excursion into Homer for the purchase of a brand new Grundens product. Don't be that guy. Ever.


In regards to fishing tackle, you will see a myriad of techniques being used on the Kenai Peninsula. Everything from conventional float rods and beads to spey rods and swung flies tied with the rarest of materials. All of it works and has its own place in the system. I have stood next to center pin anglers, float anglers and single hand fly anglers in a parking lot while I rig my spey rod for the day. Nobody cares what you fish with and nobody cares where you are from. Its Alaska, most people are from somewhere else anyway. Everyone just wants to fish. I find it refreshing.

If you are up for a unique steelhead experience at a time of year when most everyone has forgotten the Great Land exists, check flights to Anchorage. Winter flights are sometimes ridiculously cheap, especially from the PNW. The local guides are still working every last day they can before the unforgiving arctic freeze sets in. You could be on the verge of discovering your new Thanksgiving family fishing vacation.....




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Float Tube Fishing 101



By Mike Caney

Having moved recently from Washington to Montana, I find myself revisiting methods of getting on the water that I first learned when I moved to the Pacific Northwest. With less lakes close to me that lend themselves to launching my twenty-foot Thunderjet, I find myself going full circle back to my early roots.

When I moved out to Washington from Wisconsin, I lived in Spokane for a year, and during that time I took up the sport of fly fishing. The Spokane area has a wealth of smaller lakes and ponds well-suited to casting a fly for trout. Because I was a renter, I wanted a way to get on the water that fit my lifestyle. Having a boat and trailer was not an option for me. I did the research and decided a float tube would be a good solution to getting on the water. It offered simplicity, ease of storage, and wouldn't break the bank. Back in the eighties the choices of float tubes were just starting to explode. Today, anglers have a huge selection of brands, styles, and price points to choose from.

Anglers that chose to access bodies of water in a float tube open up a world of possibilities to explore. And while most people think of fly fishing when it

comes to float tubes, they are well-suited to be used for other species of fish. Bass angling from a float tube is a blast and tubes are an excellent choice for exploring waters that bass boats can't go in. Tubes can even be used in saltwater angling, so long as an angler keeps safety in the forefront. Certain rivers also lend themselves to float tubes, again with the caveat of the angler keeping safety first and foremost in mind. Whatever type of fish you like to pursue, fishing from a float tube requires certain gear and set-ups to work. Let's break down what you'll need to get started. First, let's talk about the float tube itself. There are basically two shapes that you'll see when you go shopping. The first is literally a round tube. The second is a u-shaped tube, open on one side. Across the top, connecting the two sides you'll generally have a casting apron. A round tube will have this as well.

The novice would be understandably confused when confronted with these choices. Both will get you on the water, so which is the right rig for you? I've fished out of both. The pros and cons of each in my mind are as follows:



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ROUND TUBE STYLE

Generally less expensive, easier to breakdown and store, less prone to blowing around, lighter and easier to maneuver. On the con side- smaller, so less storage capacity, harder to see on the water, less safe (generally 1-2 air chambers vs. 2-3 chambers).

U-SHAPED STYLE

more storage for gear, more stable, tracks well, better visibility for boaters, safer (usually three air chambers), tend to be able to sit up higher for easier casting. On the con side- longer to set up, more storage space needed, more expensive.

For me the choice is easy, u-tube style all the way. What I like most about my rig is the ability to bring multiple rods, higher sitting posture, and overall safety. If I were hiking and wanted to do float fishing though, I would for sure pick a round style for weight

considerations and ease of packing.

OK, you've settled on the type and pored through all the various brands, looking at specific features that you'd like to have on your tube. Some of the things I focused on were storage pockets, height and seat adjustment, ease of entry, three tubes for safety, and overall fit and finish. Is the stitching tight and neat? Does the material seem of good quality? How about user reviews? YouTube is an excellent source of reviews that allow you to see what others have to say about the tube you're considering.

Next on the agenda are the accessories you will need to purchase. Buying a tube is more than just hopping in and off you go. There are essential items you will need to have...



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FINS

These are what you use to propel yourself through the water. Your legs will be in the water as you sit on the suspended seat. Kicking the fins will move you in the opposite direction of where you are facing and kicking one fin in one direction and the other in the other direction will cause you to turn. It's something that is easy to figure out and you'll get the hang of it pretty quick.

WADERS

Unless the water is very warm, you'll want to wear chest waders, as from the waist down you'll be wet. Waders can be neoprene or slip over clothes, whatever your preference. I like the pull-on type myself.

Water Shoes – You'll want shoes on as they will provide better support for your fins. I get them one size larger to fit over my waders.

LIFE JACKET

Absolutely required in my opinion. I upgraded to the CO2 self-inflating style for comfort. The first time you get in the water and kickoff I can guarantee you'll feel a bit apprehensive. It's different from being in a solid boat. The life jacket gives me an extra level of reassurance and peace of mind.

NET

Hand-held style with a shock cord and clip to attach to your float tube is recommended.

SAFETY FLAG

If you're fishing waters that have power boats, you want to do everything you can to be seen. An orange flag on a three-foot pole will help boaters see you better. That said, if you're fishing water that has power boats on it, I would urge you to stay close to the shoreline. Float tubes do

not move fast, and you will not be able to get out of the way of a power boat bearing down on you.

Fishing on a small pond, whether for trout, bass, crappie, or whatever you pursue, is one of the most peaceful ways of fishing you can have. The simplicity of the experience, not having to deal with all the issues that come with trailering a boat, and the quiet make for a relaxing day of fishing, not to mention, opens yourself up to new places to explore and enjoy!



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As we say good bye to our summer boating weather you may find yourself wondering, “Do I winterize or do I find something to fish for?” Either way, you should probably winterize your boat, motor, and trailer, but let’s talk trolling for winter kokanee.

Winter kokanee in Washington State? Sure, so go ahead and winterize, but keep the keys handy. Find your gloves and earmuffs and make a thermos of steaming hot coffee because there are kokanee opportunities to be had. Both Western Washington and the Eastside have winter kokanee lakes.

Kokanee are the non-anadromous form of sockeye salmon. Basically, by choice or otherwise, kokanee are landlocked sockeye salmon. Kokanee are native to many Pacific Northwest lakes and have been introduced to a number of lakes across the United States.

The life cycle is of particular interest to winter kokanee anglers. Although there are exceptions, kokanee typically live 3-4 years before they spawn and die. For the dedicated winter kokanee angler that means that there are 2-3, maybe even 4-year kokanee available during the chilly months.

Winter kokanee fishing is a little different than our spring and summer fisheries. Most winter kokanee fishing is done in deeper water. Kokanee prefer water that is 50-56 degrees. In part, they are more active in this zone because it is rich in oxygen boosting energy to chase down their next meal. Each lake varies, but finding “the zone” is important during winter kokanee fishing. One way is to keep your eyes glued to your fish finder and look for fish. This is where the best fish finder/chart plotter you can afford is your friend. When you find fish, mark the spot, and pretty soon you’ll have a winter kokanee map. With it you can amaze your guest fishermen and go right to where they are. They’ll think you are the “Koke-Wisperer”, maybe a kokanee-shaman or something... You can also use a Fish Hawk Digital Gauge or the Vexilar Deptherm to graph out the water temperature at depth.

Winter kokanee fishing is more of a love thing, there is rarely a hot bite. Each lake has a winter fishery sweet spot depth. Generally, in Western Washington it is 30-60', and Eastern Washington 40-200' deep. Each lake, especially on the westside, seems to have a brief period each day where the kokanee will put on the feed bag and go on the bite outside of your usual grind it out depth.

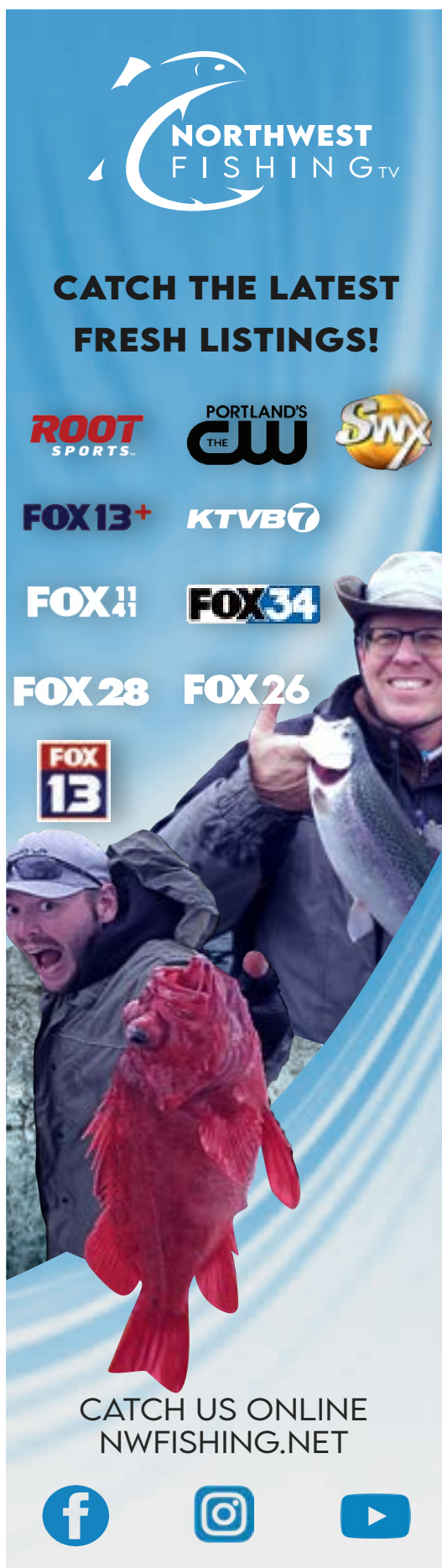
Kokanee are filter feeders, and the bulk of their calories come from plankton blooms. There are windows any given day where there is a bloom or hatch, and the kokanee will briefly leave their comfort zone to feed. Because the bite may be 2:06-2:23 at 43' it is best to choose your winter kokanee lake close to home and learn it. Especially when winter kokanee fishing, keep a detailed fishing log.

Both summer and winter fish are a noble opponent. They often make short runs, jump, and go bonkers at the net. Summer fish are more aggressive, but winter kokanee take more finesse to get them in the net. After plating, smoking, or chowder-izing hundreds of kokanee, both the summer and the winter fish are excellent table fare, but the winter fish are outstanding for whole or fillet pan-frys and grilling.

The following list includes winter kokanee lakes that I am familiar with, and is focused on trolling. I am sure there are other winter kokanee lakes available. My westside lakes were originally selected because they are open all year and they have deeper basins that may hold fish. Both the westside and the eastside winter kokanee lakes are listed by my preference. My preference is based on success, proximity to home, and the potential for a trophy fish.

EASTERN WASHINGTON

Lake Roosevelt – Nothing in Eastern Washington is close to home, and to be honest, as I get older, I don't like hauling the boat over the pass in the winter anymore. That said, I love fishing Lake Roosevelt, so with the right forecast we may head that direction. I'm sure kokanee are available throughout the lake, but we usually fish out of Spring Canyon and focus on the dam area, but we also fish the lower 5 or 6 miles. I typically start at about 40', but may fish 100+ deep as required. Because there is the potential to hook a 3+ pounder, I typically up my leader to 20-pound fluorocarbon.

A vertical promotional banner for Northwest Fishing TV. At the top is the logo, which features a stylized fish jumping into a circle with the text 'NORTHWEST FISHING TV'. Below the logo, the text 'CATCH THE LATEST FRESH LISTINGS!' is displayed in bold. A grid of television station logos follows, including ROOT SPORTS, PORTLAND'S THE CW, SWX, FOX 13+, KTVB 7, FOX 41, FOX 34, FOX 28, FOX 26, and FOX 13. The lower half of the banner features a photograph of two men in fishing gear; one is holding a large silver fish, and the other is holding a large red fish. At the bottom, the text 'CATCH US ONLINE NWFISHING.NET' is shown, followed by icons for Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

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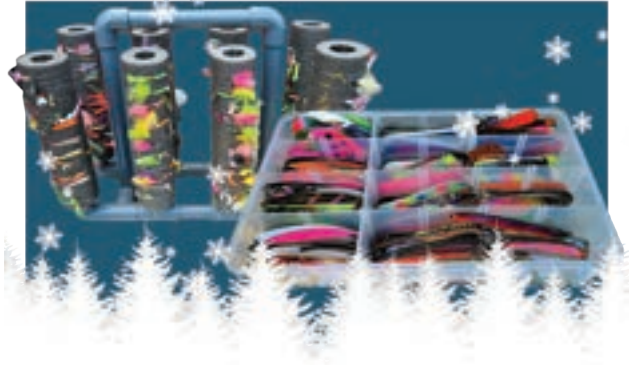
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Lake Chelan – It is a great winter kokanee lake, offering pretty consistent fishing. The winter kokanee fishery is concentrated between Manson, maybe the Narrows, up to 25 Mile Creek. There is enough kokanee in the Wapato Point area to keep you on the water if, or should I say when, the weather kicks up. The winter fishery at Chelan is a deep fishery, you can expect to run your gear 80-200' deep. Watch the weather!



Before I get to the westside lakes, let's discuss winter boating safety/etiquette. Carry chains for both your tow vehicle and for at least 1 axle on the trailer. Bring a couple sand bags and a shovel. A liberal application of sand can be a lifesaver. At the ramp, assess the situation before you back down a long icy ramp. Take the time to chain up your tow vehicle if required. Thought being; although once your tires hit the water you'll have traction, the area between the top of the ramp and the water could be icy. You don't want to jackknife ½ way down the ramp. It would put a damper on your kokanee plans. Once the trailer is wet you may have to let the rig sit in the water for a bit to thaw and let the boat float free. Be safe on the boat, you don't want to slip and end up sharing the lake with your aquatic rival.

Finally, and as a courtesy; at the end of your time on the lake load your boat and slowly pull out of the water just enough to clear the water. Stop and let the rig drain or drip-dry, this will minimize ice buildup on the lower 1/3 of the ramp.

WESTERN WASHINGTON WINTER KOKANEE LAKES

Lake Washington – Although not exactly close to home, Lake Washington is my favorite westside winter kokanee lake. Our largest westside kokanee was a 3.13# 18" fish. We have caught many 1# plus and a few 2# kokanee in Lake Washington. To protect juvenile and migrating sockeye salmon there is an 8 – 18" slot limit for kokanee on in Lake Washington. A standard sockeye drill works, but consider stepping up your speed and gear selection. Most of our larger Lake Washington kokanee were taken on hoochies and 8" flashers. The eyes have it; what am I talking about? Who knows why but most of our large Lake Washington kokanee were bamboozled by a lure with eyes. If Lake Washington were closer to home, I'd be fishing it every day that I possibly could.

Lake Cavanaugh – Lake Cavanaugh is an odd duck, easy kokanee limits for fish 10 – 18" kokanee during the spring, summer and fall, but when winter comes around it seems that every kokanee you catch is a chrome 8 – 12" fish. My nonscientific guess is that the majority of the kokanee in Cavanaugh spawn at 4 years and the winter sport catch are primarily 3-year kokanee. Most winter kokanee in Lake Cavanaugh will be caught over the deep pocket just east of the islands.

Lake Samish - Samish is really close to home with the typical winter kokanee bite being later in the day. It is a great lake for "breakfast and chores are done, let's go fishing". The lake includes a large basin with a smaller connected lake at the north end. When fishing winter kokanee on Lake Samish, most of our fish are caught in one of two areas. The first is along the west shoreline just west of the WDFW launch.



The second is generally in the center, maybe favoring the north shore/center of the small lake. Your trolling speed is critical, plan on fishing .8-1.0 mph with lots of “S” turns. Oddly, we have caught a fair number of Samish winter kokanee pulling small minnow type baits for cutthroat, but standard kokanee gear is a better starting point.

Lake Stevens – We don’t fish winter kokanee on Lake Stevens often, but it does host a winter fishery. There may be local secrets, but in our experience

Lake Stevens winter kokanee are a hit or a miss. Most of our winter kokanee were caught along the bay at the northwest side of the lake. Typical kokanee gear with a pinch of nightcrawler or worm seems to have an edge over tuna corn.

Yale Lake – Yale is a great kokanee lake and is open year-round. There are winter challenges if you decide to make the trip. The wind can produce some crazy short chop, so make sure that you check the forecast before you hitch up the trailer. We haven’t had a problem but I’m pretty sure that the reservoir water levels are down November-February. The Yale Park launch should be open but other ramps may have restrictions. Finally, there could be hazardous floating debris/flotsam. Boat with caution, and if it’s choppy, slow way down. The winter kokanee fishery should be concentrated by the dam or across the lake from Speelya Creek. In my experience, if fishing less than 30-40’, run really long setbacks or use lead line rigs.

OK, you have some idea which way you’re headed in your kokanee quest, now what? I don’t really change overall tactics when fishing winter kokanee. The usual kokanee drill; a small dodger, lure with tuna corn is a great place to start. Make sure you have your favorite scents, maybe a container of worms, and additional leader onboard. Not always, but occasionally, you will need to increase your leader length. When trolling for winter kokanee, you will want to stay under 1.0 MPH. I probably do more “S” turns or engage the “Hunt” mode on my iTroll more often during our winter kokanee adventures. Our dodger box has more dodgers in it than most, but during the winter kokanee fishery my go to dodgers are painted, copper, or even dark metalflake. Using either double spinner rigs or flies behind the dodger seem to consistently produce kokanee during the winter fishery. After you hook your cold weather prize, gently fight the fish, and, as with any kokanee fishery, a long handle net will increase your actual catch verses hook up statistics.

I know that it will be cooler out, maybe even freezing, and the lake temperature should be down as well. But make sure you still care for your catch. Bleed them and keep them on ice, or, even better, in a slurry in your cooler; you’ll want to preserve the quality of your hard-earned prize.

Winterize or not, keep your kokanee gear handy. The above is just a starting point. Choose a lake, learn it, and you’ll soon be the local expert! Trolling for Washington State winter kokanee can be frustrating. With the closure of most of our winter salmon fisheries, a bit of frustration will quickly become an addiction. Enjoy your winter kokanee adventure, but with the potential for rainy, slick roads, be sure to use extra caution towing your boat to and from your new favorite winter activity.



It's the time of year where the once colorful maple and alder trees shed their golden leaves and give way to bare branches. Pumpkin patches, corn mazes with the family, and for some; salmon fishing, all become phased out as we make the natural turn into winter. Fortunately for us anglers, there's really no need to hang up our rods and stow away our reels just yet. For winter, in all its blustery glory, brings plenty of excitement and opportunity for both the seasoned and greenhorn anglers alike.

From around mid-October to early December, Chum salmon arrive to the Puget sound in numbers that far surpass that of any other salmon species in our region. Along with holding the title of making up the largest biomass out of all of the salmonids that make their returns from the Pacific Ocean to the Northwest, they also hold the title of the least desired salmon when it comes to table fair. It might be the "spawned out" coloring that the fish have well before they hit the creeks, it could be the large teeth resembling a K-9 that protrude out of their mouths (hence the commonly used name "dog salmon"), or it could be that Chum salmon flesh simply just doesn't hold a candle to that of the chinook, or the

coho. This might be true in a sense. The fat content is possibly the lowest out of all the salmon, the flesh is flakier and lacks the red or pink hue that is signature to most, but, if one was to look at chum as its own unique thing, and to not compare apples to oranges (so to speak), Chum salmon can be appreciated as its own freestanding type of fish. A good overnight brine and a smoke bath for several hours turns this very misunderstood fish into a delectable snack. I'll often cook a chum salmon the same way I would a rainbow trout, by wrapping a fillet in tinfoil with butter, garlic, lemon, and other aromatics, and then baking in the oven. The culinary potential is there if you're willing to get creative.

I tend to think very food forwardly when writing about fish and fishing, but it would be a massive disservice to both the chum salmon and the dedicated anglers who fish for them if I was to leave out what is potentially the biggest draw to this fishery, and that is...the fight. Chum salmon may arguably be the strongest pound for pound salmon species out there, and they can also grow to be extraordinarily large. It's not uncommon to hook a 15-20 lb fish that will give any strong-armed angler a good run for their money as they work to bring them ashore.

Chum fishing from the shore is often done on a sliding bobber with an anchovy, but anglers can also find success with spinners, or by casting flies. Though a bit more challenging, some anglers will move away from the shores and fish the salt by trolling a flasher and a hoochie at low speeds, or by slowly mooching a cut plug herring. Anglers fishing from boats may have more difficulties enticing a bite, or even getting on top of the fish in the first place, but they'll be rewarded with a day of fishing completely void of the combat style environment that is so often associated with chum fishing.

There is no shortage of locations to find these fish on their way back to spawn. Typically, the best fishing for chum will occur during an incoming tide where the saltwater meets the mouth of a creek, river, or a hatchery. These areas are known as terminal fisheries, and here I will list 7 Washington terminal fisheries that are sure to produce. Keep in mind, many of these fisheries see a lot of anglers at any given time, so try to play nice out there!

MCLANE CREEK

McLane creek is a very popular south sound fishery that sits at the southeastern section of mud bay in Northwest Olympia. When the tide is high it can be an absolute frenzy, and it's not uncommon for 3 or 4 anglers to have a fish on their lines at the same time. Most anglers park on the side of Mud Bay Road and walk down to the overpass near the restaurant. The saltwater bottlenecks here thus providing a waterway thick with salmon. There's not a whole lot of bank access, so if you want to move away from the crowd, try HWY 101 just west of Mud bay Road where the water bottlenecks a second time underneath the highway.



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PERRY CREEK

Perry creek, also in Northwest Olympia, and only minutes from McLane creek, allows anglers another opportunity to tap into the productive mud bay action. Old HWY 410, just west of, and parallel to the 101, provides access to this fishery. Anglers can expect to catch chum in the 10-15 lb range here, but as with all chum fisheries, it's not uncommon to land a hog or two that exceeds this average.

HOOD CANAL HATCHERY

Located just 20 minutes north of Shelton, the Hoodspoint hatchery may arguably be the best chum fishery in the region. Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife own the hatchery and allows public access to the waters directly in front of the hatchery itself. A metal stair set allows anglers to walk down to the beach where anglers can tap into the thousands of returning salmon on an incoming tide. It's important to pay close attention to what

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the tides are doing as it's easy to get trapped on the beach as the water level rises.

JOHNS CREEK

Located in Shelton, on Highway 3, Johns creek meets with the tidal flats of Oakland Bay. A "public fishing" sign marks Johns Creek trail which will bring you down to Fisherman's Point on the edge of the tide flats. The area is surrounded with private land, so pay close attention to signage. Johns Creek is known for being one of the earlier spots for fall-run chum salmon to arrive.

MINTER CREEK

As mentioned before, combat fishing is often synonymous with chum salmon fishing, Minter Creek is no exception to this rule. That being said, if you choose your days wisely you can often avoid the crowds. Minter Creek is located on the Key Peninsula about 30 minutes northwest of Tacoma. Chum Salmon make their way up Henderson bay and into Minter bay where they finally reach the hatchery via Minter Creek.

CHICO CREEK

Chico Creek is located on the Kitsap peninsula, about an hour north of Olympia. This fishery experiences very large returns of chum salmon that make their way through Dyes inlet. Bring waiters and enjoy the wildlife viewing at this scenic protected estuary.

WHATCOM CREEK BELLINGHAM

For anglers north of Seattle, Whatcom Creek in Bellingham, is a viable option. Chum make their way past Lummi Island and into the Bellingham Bay for a shot up the creek-mouth to Bellingham hatchery. The tidewater area near the hatchery is where you can legally cast your lines. This fishery can also be classified as combat fishery, so be patient, give fellow anglers space, and try your best to practice proper fish etiquette amongst the chaos!



CHRISTMAS SMOKED SALMON


BY NATALIE ACKERMAN

INGREDIENTS

- 4 to 6 Salmon steaks (skinned) of your choice
- 2 Tbsp.....Oil (Olive or Vegetable)
- 1-2 Tbsp.....Traeger "Coffee Rub" (may be substituted with a BBQ rub)
- 1-2 Tbsp.....Kinder's "The Seafood Blend" (may substitute with other fish/seafood blends)
- ½ cup.....Brown Sugar, light or dark
- To Taste.....Honey

COOKING DIRECTIONS

1. Mix the Coffee Rub, The Seafood Blend and Brown Sugar in a bowl.
2. Lightly coat each side of the Salmon with oil.
3. Coat both sides of the salmon with the spice rub.
4. Preheat Traeger to 180 degrees and load pellets
5. Place the Salmon steaks on a veggie pan.
6. Smoke at 180 degrees for 45-50 minutes.
7. Increase temperature to 375 degrees.
8. Cook until internal temperature reaches 145-150 degrees.
9. Glaze each Salmon steak with honey and cook for another 5 minutes.
10. Remove from the Traeger and serve with your choice of side.



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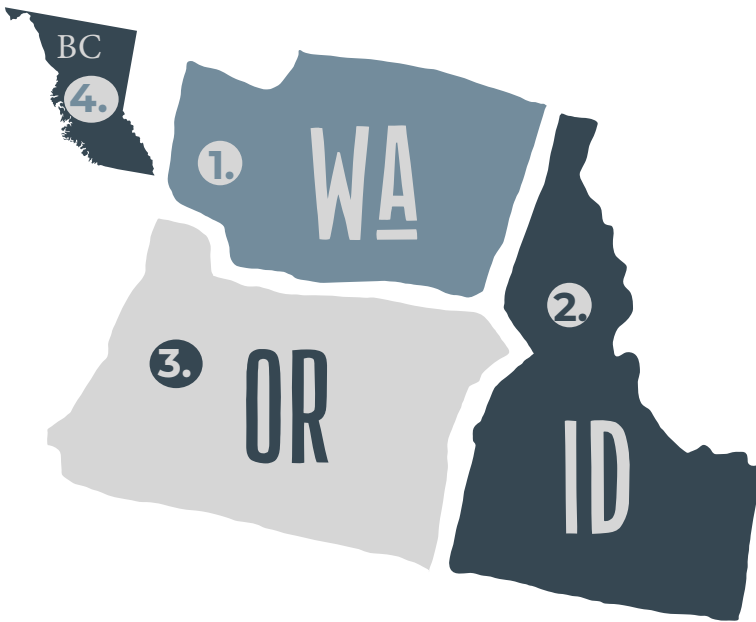
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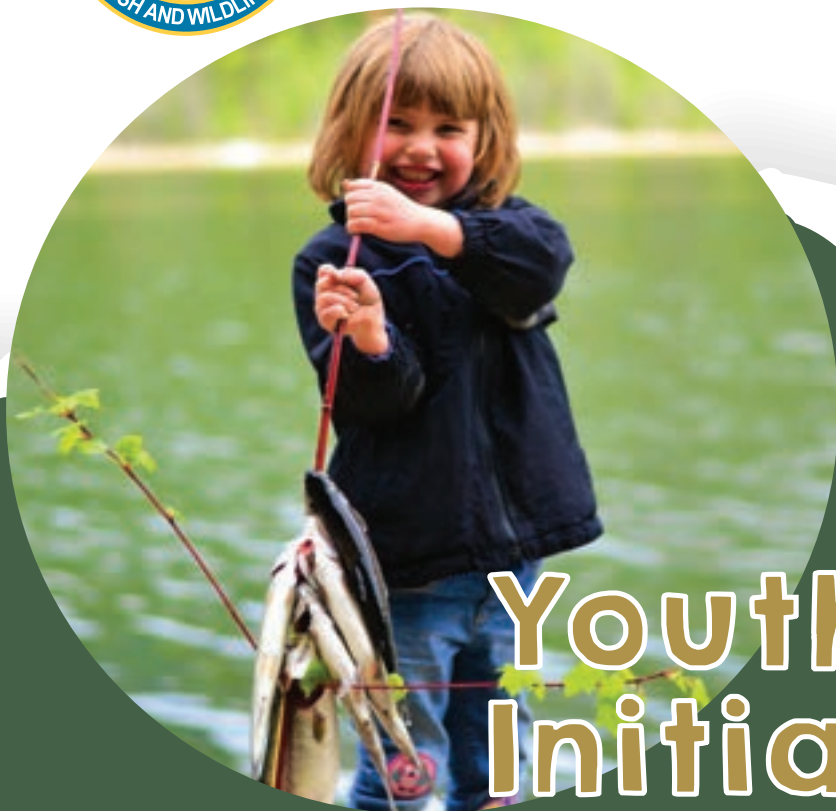


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