



#### **Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit is required** for all boats registered outside of Washington State



#### **Washington State Law** RCW 77.15.160

- All boats registered outside of Washington State **must have** an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Permit before launching in Washington waters.
- Permits cost **\$24** and are valid for one year.
- Failure to have the permit may result in a \$150 fine.

#### **Protecting Our Waters**

Funds from the AIS Prevention Permit support efforts to keep Washington's waters free of aquatic invasive species and manage infestations when prevention fails.

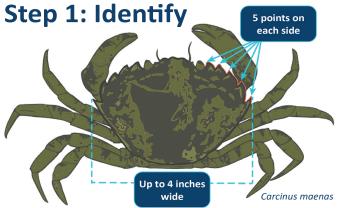
#### How to buy:

- Online fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov
- At a fishing and hunting license dealer near you wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/dealers



# **Report Invasive** European Green Crabs





#### Step 2: Report

If you find a suspected European green crab or their shell, photograph it, note the location, and report it.



#### Scan to report!



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

#### **EDITOR'S CORNER:**

Full speed ahead! As we say goodbye to an amazing sockeye year the focus turns to coho. This was always my favorite month – launching out of the Edmonds sling, watching my boat hang suspended in air, hoping I wouldn't be on the evening news... we'd motor out and start our troll at the border of Area 9 and 10. It was always a tough decision – and I almost always picked Troll South in Area 10. Unless the waters were calm and Possession Bar was calling my name. I can still smell the saltwater and hear the sounds of the seagulls.

Meanwhile, a new state-record chinook salmon was caught here in Montana at Fort Peck. Jim Fauth landed a 32.62-pound chinook. Fort Peck grows big fish!

Whatever your favorite late summer/fall fishery, I hope you have many opportunities to get out and enjoy this beautiful time of year. Stay safe!

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



# www.northwestfishing.net/ @northwestfishingtv

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FISHING













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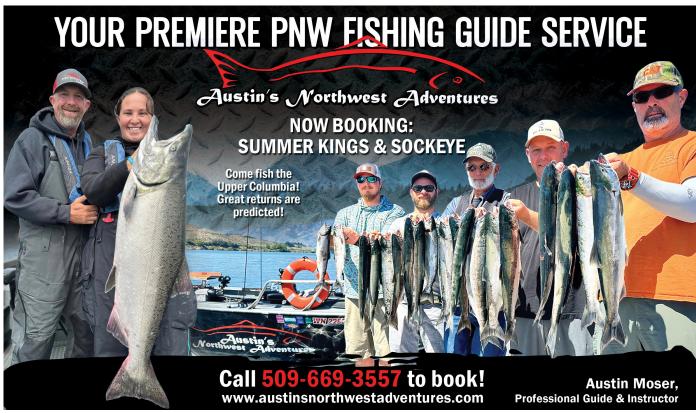
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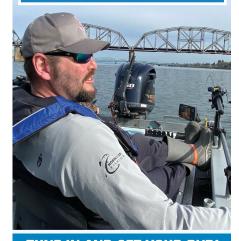
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# **NORTHWEST** REEL LIFE

A Digital Anglers LLC & Northwest Fishing Publication

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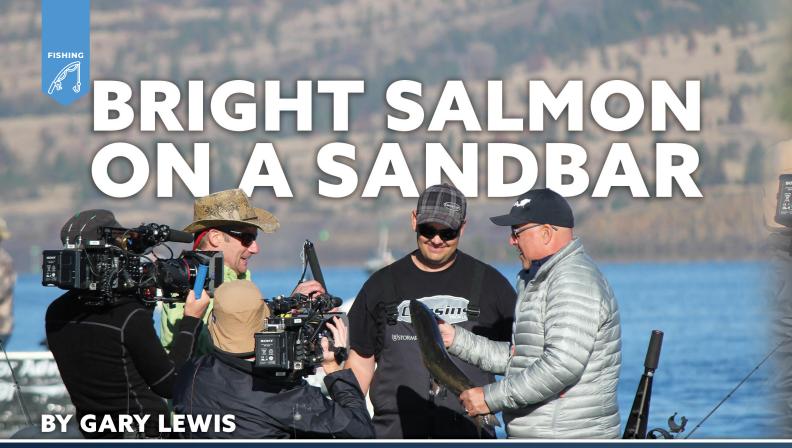
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An up-close epicurean angler perspective on the making of a Travel Channel special with Chef Andrew Zimmern.

It mattered to me. It mattered to Josh. It mattered to Andrew Zimmern, the host of Bizarre Foods on the Travel Channel.

On the Columbia, where the chinook blast upriver on swells of tide from the mouth of the river up past Washougal and then seek out the 12-16-foot deep travel corridors close to the banks, the hot salmon bite happens in the first hour. It didn't matter to the 17

other people on Zimmern's crew.

Zimmern was following the Lewis & Clark trail with a perspective on the types of foods the explorers might have encountered. He chose September when the fall chinook salmon (also called king salmon) run is in full swing.

We started in the second hour, on a Tuesday in September, after camera operators, directors, drivers, handlers, drone techs, and a bodyguard were breakfasted, caffeine'd up, and constitutionalized.

Josh Cooper, stood, his hand on the tiller, his eyes on the water ahead. We idled away from the Rowena launch (Mayer State Park, west of The Dalles). Ahead of us, 64 other boats were on the fish. Rods bent and nets flashed as we took our place in the throng of watercraft.

Cooper, who makes his home in Vancouver, WA, our captain for the day, is

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Gary Lewis weighs a fish on a certified scale. Note the duck decoy Lewis uses in case he drops the scale in the water. The fish was the main ingredient in a shore lunch prepared by Zimmern (right) for Lewis (left) and Josh Cooper (center). Photo courtesy The Dalles Chamber of Commerce.

one of the best anglers on the river. But sometimes that's not enough.

The bite was over when we dropped our baits.

With us, on Josh's 26-foot Motion Marine Fishing Machine were two camera operators and a sound technician. A camera boat trailed in our wake with the director and additional camera operators. A drone operator and his team staged on the Washington side of the river near the mouth of the White

Salmon. The bodyguard stayed on the beach.

Zimmern is no stranger to a fishing rod, but he hadn't fished for Columbia chinook before. We showed him the baits, hoping he wouldn't gobble them or try to get us to eat them.

We call this hover-fishing when the fish stack two feet off the bottom and we drift our baits into a biomass of salmon, as drag-free as possible.

I looped a cluster of cured salmon roe and a sand

shrimp tail on a bloodred Daiichi hook. We drizzled Pro-Cure Tuna on the potpourri in case our prospective salmon had cultivated palates.

To hover-fish, the procedure is to start at the top of holding water and run the boat a bit slower than the top currents, the baits "hovering" off the bottom.

Zimmern's rod had a Daiwa line-counter. Without digital advantage, I dropped the lead weight to the

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bottom and then cranked up two turns.

We tried to follow the contour of the river bottom. When it sloped up, we reeled up, when the water deepened, we dropped weights down to touch, then cranked up two turns.

Fish bit. They flared their gills, inhaled to sample the salmon eggs and shrimp then spit the baits.

Josh missed one. Andrew missed two and I missed a fish.

In the east, the sun climbed higher. Our chances diminished. A drone like an angel flew overhead and three hundred pairs of eyes on 65 boats looked to the heavens.

Then it happened! A fish bit and the hook stuck.

Andrew arced the spine of the rod against His Majesty, the king salmon. After a few tense minutes, a seven-pounder thrashed in the net. I looked at it, pronounced it a female, and guessed Zimmern would try to spoon-feed us

salmon eggs. With one in the boat, we motored away, back to the ramp where the crew had assembled a grill and Dutch ovens.

While a director in cowboy boots stalked up and down the beach, cigarette in and out of his mouth, eyes flicking from one element of the scene to another, Zimmern's knives flashed. When I angled in to check on the ingredients, I saw prime red-fleshed steaks and two skeins of milt. Milt! Our fish was a male.

In a male salmon, the sperm we call milt lies in two foot-long rolls. About an inch in diameter, the texture of fresh liver, it is often discarded. It shouldn't be.

On a sandbar on the big river that is the lifeline of The West, there is no better way to taste the elemental flavor of the salmon.

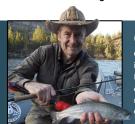
Roasted lemons, eggplant, and onions. Rice and a reduction. Zimmern wasted no motion.

Flames licked at the grill.

Seasonings are seared into vegetables, salmon strips, and organs. In moments we held salmon bowls while the good smells wafted out to fishermen still angling for their limits of bright chinook.

The best place to eat salmon is on a sandbar in September. We ate the strips of salmon with forks and fingers. We ate the milt and proclaimed it worthy. Milt and eggs. These are the building blocks of the protein that energizes the Columbia River. How does milt taste? It cooks up like a better version of tofu and it adds a certain something to a salmon bowl.

This was Zimmern's first time fishing for fall Chinook. While we labored for a bite we talked fly-fishing and grouse hunting. And it was a chance for me to get a glimpse into the machine that was a big Travel Channel production. At the heart of it all was a chef who was a risk taker, storyteller, all-showman, and a real sportsman.



#### 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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September and October are my favorite times of year and one of my favorite places to recreate is at Potholes Reservoir, located between Moses Lake and Othello in Eastern Washington. This is a large irrigation reservoir fed by Crab Creek, Lind Coulee as well as Winchester and Frenchman's Wasteway. At full pool, the lake has 28,000 surface acres of water but after a long summer of dropping water the lake definitely "fishes smaller".

While there is not as much water to fish, particularly back in the sand dunes area and Crab Creek, there is still plenty of lake to fish and at this time of year, the fish are biting as they beef up

for the long winter ahead. Let's run through some of the species you can fish for here and some effective ways to catch them:

#### BASS:

Bassmaster Magazine ranked Potholes Reservoir as the ninth-best bass fishing destination in the Western United States this year and for good reason. There is a healthy population of both largemouth and smallmouth bass in several age classes. The largemouth tend to be bigger, averaging two pounds and getting up to 7-plus pounds. At a typical bass tournament, you'll need to have a five-fish bag weighing over twenty pounds for a chance to

win. The smallmouth run a bit smaller, with one-pound fish being abundant. But I caught a 5.4-pound smallmouth here during September so big smallmouth are around.

At this time of year, the baitfish have moved out into the main lake, and so have the gamefish that are after them. Pete Fisher at the Mardon Resort Tackle Shop and the owner of Fisher Brothers Baits says fishing in front of the dunes on the main lake is the best place to go. The fish will be suspended around sandy humps and Pete says fishing a football head jig with a hula grub trailer is an effective way to catch these fish, which are primarily

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largemouth bass. If you want to go after smallmouth bass head towards the face of O'Sullivan Dam or into Lind Coulee at the south end of the lake. Personally, I enjoy using deep diving crankbaits here this time of vear which are effective for both bass and walleye. One of my favorite lures is a Berkley Digger crankbait, which dives to depths of 14 feet. When it comes to fishing near the dam, Pete Fisher likes to use perch colored 3/4 ounce swimbaits or topwater plugs with white being a preferred color.

#### WALLFYF:

The walleve bite can be spectacular in the autumn months. These tasty fish tend to be found off the face of the sand dunes or the mouth of Crab Creek. As Nathan Lafrance says, "If you aren't sure where to go, just look for the line of boats out there, easy to find." As for how to catch them, Nathan recommends trolling diving crankbaits at a depth of 10 to 12 feet. Nathan says other lures to try are a jointed Berkley Flicker Shad #7 or a Bill Lewis Walleye Precise Walleye Lite crankbait.





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#### PANFISH:

The autumn bite for panfish is excellent and sometimes overlooked by anglers targeting trout, bass and walleye. There is a combined limit for bluegill and crappie of 25 fish, and the crappie have to be at least nine inches long to keep. This regulation has helped turn the reservoir into a quality fishery and 15-inch crappie are relatively common. Last year, an angler reeled in a bluegill that weighed over 2.2 pounds, nearly beating the state record. The perch can also be sizeable here, reaching north of 14-inches in length.

One person who really enjoys fishing for crappie is Pete Fisher. He has a couple of suggestions about where to find them and catch them. Pete says the crappie, like the bass, migrate out of the sand dunes in the late summer. During the autumn months they will be found at the face (or in front of) the sand dunes on the main lake. Fisher savs you can cast or troll Berkley #5 Flicker Shads, especially in a Chrome Clown color pattern. Another way to catch crappie is to fish a small jig under a slip bobber after you find a school of these fish. Fisher prefers a white Bobby Garland shad or DS Fry soft

plastic lure paired with a small 1/32 or 1/64th ounce jig head. If you do catch a bunch of panfish, you'll be happy to know there is a fish cleaning station at both MarDon Resort and at Potholes State Park near the boat ramp.

#### TROUT:

The rainbow bite really turns on in the fall and the size of these fish are impressive. One to three-pound rainbows are commonplace and sometimes you'll get them bigger than that. Nathan LaFrance suggests trolling Berkley Flicker Shads or longer minnow shaped

crankbaits. As to where to find the trout, a couple of good places are off the mouth of Frenchman's Wasteway or in the northeast corner of the lake near the mouth of Crab Creek.

#### **RESOURCES:**

If you are looking for a place to stay you can camp at Potholes State Park or MarDon Resort. which also has cabins and cottages for rent. The resort also has a tackle shop and The Beach House bar and restaurant. The Potholes Bar and Grill is another nearby restaurant that is close to the entrance

of the state park. If you have never fished or hunted Potholes Reservoir before, consider booking a "Cast & Blast" trip with Ross Outdoor Adventures. These trips are only offered in October. Shelby Ross and his guides know how to navigate the tricky channels leading into the sand dunes like the back of their hands. They will take you in before dawn, treat you to a fun duck hunt, and finish the hunt with duck poppers cooked up in the blind. After that you put away the shotguns and go trolling for walleye, usually picking up several other

fish species along the way. It makes for a fun day and a great introduction to the fall hunting and fishing scene at this spectacular destination.

#### WEBSITES:

rossoutdooradventures.com mardonresort.com parks.wa.gov









Strip, strip, strip... the intermediate sinking fly line passed through my fingers in three-inch increments. Varying the retrieve, sometimes fast, slower, pausing and resuming my retrieve, I floated along in my belly tube, taking in all the remote mountain lake had to offer. A tree-lined shore, snow-covered mountains for a backdrop, and not another soul in sight.

Suddenly the line came to a hard stop, jerking my rod forward, the frantic pulling of another chunky rainbow signaled "fish on". Catching up my line to the reel, I played the healthy

native trout to me, sliding the knotless net under her belly. The glistening distinctive markings of the bow glowed vibrantly in the evening light. Gently removing my barbless fly, I cradled the tired fish while it rested. In a few moments, the rainbow impatiently strained against the confines of the net. eager to return to the cool depths of the lake. Safely recovered, I tilted the net and watched the fish dart away, a splash of cold water in my face as if to say, "I won't be fooled again!". If you had just one fly in your arsenal to catch trout.

what would you pick? The hardcore anglers of course will dismiss this question as irrelevant and silly.

Fly fishing is all about matching the hatch, and there are literally hundreds of variations of flies – dry, wet, nymph, the possibilities could fill up several tackle boxes. Picking one sounds like a fool's errand, doesn't it? Well, I will cast my vote and be that fool. Drum roll, please...

My favorite, go to fly is – the venerable Wooley Bugger. Was that your choice as well?

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If not, let me expand on why the Wooley Bugger is often the first fly I will cast out on a new body of water, and some of the qualities that make this fly, in my opinion, so essential to be in your tackle box.

First, a Wooley Bugger is a wet fly which can be used in lakes, rivers, ponds, and even saltwater fishing. Wooley Buggers come in a variety of styles and colors and can be considered to imitate many different food sources for fish, including small minnows, leeches, nymphs, and anything else swimming around a lake

or river. As such, Wooley Buggers are the ultimate "searching" fly, perfect for exploring new bodies of water

Wooley Buggers lend themselves well to more than traditional fly fishing. They can be adapted for many styles of angling and fish species. Years ago, Uncle Wes Malmberg took me to a SW Washington Lake, and long lining a Wooley Bugger with a Mack's Smile Blade off the back of his 14-foot aluminum boat we spent a relaxing morning catching and releasing rainbow

after rainbow. A couple of split shots were all that was required to sink the fly under the surface and entice fish after fish to grab on. Fished bait and scent-less, we easily caught and safely released several dozen fish that day. Such a simple but deadly effective method! I immediately went home and tied up several new colors to add to my collection.

For the beginner fly-tier, the Wooley Bugger is likely the first fly you ever will learn to tie. The reason is this fly is simple to make, and is generally on a







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larger, long hook shank, making it easy for beginner fingers (or those with older. arthritic hands). As such, it's a great "introduction to fly-tying fly", before tackling those challenging #20 dry flies and nymphs! A quick search on the internet will provide you with a multitude of videos and tutorials so I won't go into the actual tying here, suffice it to say if this is an interest, you'll find plenty of information on how to tie the Wooley Bugger. It's a great first fly to tie and is hard to make a bad-looking one.

Another application for the Wooley Bugger that you don't hear about often, but can be deadly effective, is trolling behind a sling blade for kokanee.

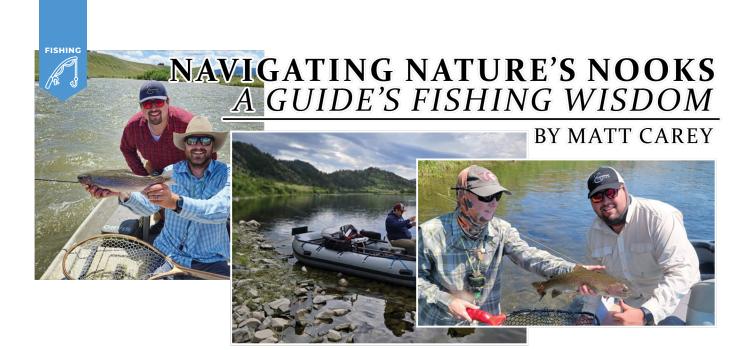
Go-to colors are pink, red, and orange. Add a Mack's Smile Blade and a single kernel of corn, a short leader of 8 inches, and you are in business. The single hook provides excellent penetration on strikes, but if you're anxious about that single hook tying on a small treble hook or trailing hook is certainly fair game.

Now that I live in Montana, more of my time is spent fly fishing. When I arrive at a new lake or pond if I don't see rising trout, I'll

start with a sinking tip line and Wooley Bugger in a natural color, tans, browns, and greens. Casting and stripping back is a triedand-true method, as his casting out and slowly kicking my belly boat along, waiting for that solid jerk signaling another fish fooled by this classic and timeless fly. Whether behind a fly rod, spinning rod, or trolling rod, the Wooley Bugger will get you on fish. Give it a try, I think you'll be happy with the results!



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Guides offer an invaluable service to anglers. Whether you've never fished before, are new to the area, or just need to learn a few new techniques and tricks, guides provide knowledge that can stay with you even after you've paid for their services. When fishing with a guide, it's like the grownup version of show and tell. They'll get you situated with everything you need and be sure to coach you throughout the day on the water. I've been lucky enough to fish with some great guides and I have not taken their teachings for granted. I'd urge you to think about these different areas of the fishing experience next time you fish with a guide and how

you can apply them when you fish on your own.

#### THE SETUP—

Trial and error can be a learning experience in itself, but man it really speeds things up when you know what you're doing. Asking questions is never a bad thing to do when fishing with a guide. A guide who wants to help make the most of your experience with them will often answer questions that aren't even asked. Taking the initiative and asking about the gear being used when fishing with a guide not only gives you something to talk about but is a learning experience in itself. Why are we using the blue/silver lure instead of the red/gold lure? Is there a reason you're using squid as bait instead

of the herring? What's a split shot and why do we need it?

Your guide can be a wealth of knowledge if you only take the time to ask the questions. I'd also add this - there is a great sense of accomplishment when you retain what you've learned from a professional and apply it. I think this holds true in nearly all aspects of life. Learn how to cook a delicious meal from a chef and then replicate the dish at home? You might win spouse of the year. Have someone in a leadership position in your job show you how to do something and then you accomplish that task later to be complimented by them? Great job satisfaction and collective efficacy. Purchase the right kind of flies for the







time of year when fishing, tie them, fish on your own in an area you think will be effective, and actually catch something? This time without a guide? That's a great feeling.

#### ON THE WATER \_

Great, you've got the gear. You've tied everything together the way it should be just like the guide showed you when you last fished together. Now all that's left is putting the line in the water. Although, there's a lot of water to cover and you only have so much time available to fish. If you were hopefully paying attention to your quided fishing experience, vou should be able to ascertain whether or not you are fishing in an area that is likely to hold fish or at a depth that will be productive for you. If you're planning on coming back to the same waterbody. make a mental note when your guide tells you "This spot is usually really good"

or "The fish like to group up behind these rocks". Those clues can be used when you come back again on your own, if you remember. More broadly, a guide can help you identify general areas that will likely hold the fish you are looking for. The guide can provide you with a "Habitat 101" crash course while out on the water. Knowing your fish is migrating because of the spawning season, like a plateaued rocky surface, or will hold up in a small bay to rest can help provide you some general knowledge on where to go when fishing on your own.

#### THE FIGHT\_

As mentioned earlier, the setup is a crucial part of the fishing experience. Knowing what kinds of lures or bait to use, how long leaders should be or the distance from dodger to lure are all invaluable. Similarly, fishing in an area that is likely to actually hold the fish. But, arguably

the most important information you can take away from a guided fishing trip is how to actually fight the fish once hooked! Take the tips learned during your fishing adventure as you played the fish, with some coaching from your quide, and apply them as best you can in your personal fishing. I know the feeling of hooking into a nice fish and the sense of urgency that takes over, the adrenaline-pumping feeling where you tense up and feel like you've got to bring this fish in. All you think about is "hand, reel, crank" until the fish is in the boat. If you can calm your mind during this tussle with your opponent and think back to the advice from your guided experiences, you'll not only have a more enjoyable time battling the fish, but you should be more likely to land it. Something as subtle as bracing yourself up against





the side of the boat when out on the choppy ocean water can help provide solid footing. Remembering and recognizing where the fast water is in the river and steering your fish away from the heavy current and into a section with slower water makes for an, in theory, easier catch.

I only scratched the surface of all the benefits and help that guides can provide us on the water. Certainly, their knowledge and advice are helpful at the moment, while they're in the same boat as us and judging the conditions of the water in real-time.

Still, a savvy angler will retain their advice and draw upon the guide's experience to apply solid fishing techniques not only during the fishing trip but out on the water during personal adventures as

well. Want to get started with some solid guides who are sure to get you on some great fish? Check out our "Guides and Charters" section at the back of the magazine or in the directory section of the website. They can help you get started if you're new to fishing, offer advice to seasoned fishermen that only comes with experience from hundreds of days on the water in a year and help you expand your knowledge about the variety of fish and techniques to catch them that swim throughout the northwest. I know I've benefited tremendously from their guidance in my own personal fishing outings and know that the same success in my personal fishing life will continue as I keep fishing with and learning from many great guides in the future!







# 55.



# 8-DAY MEXICÓ FISHING ADVENTURE

Join Toby and "Baja" Cindy Wyatt & Rob and Hillary Holman as they travel to Loreto, Mexico to film an unbelievable episode of Northwest Fishing!

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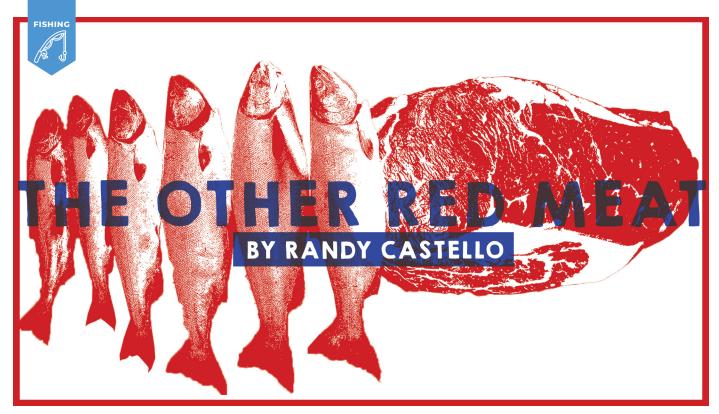
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TV show dependent on producer discretion. All participants must sign a talent release. One day of fishing may be exchanged with one day of golf or an island beach tour day with snorkeling.



It has been an awesome year for chasing salmon out on the salt, but if you are a Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) fisherman you may be thinking now what? MA 7 chinook is closed for the year. At this point, there are limited fall chinook opportunities for our Western Washington salmon slayers. Then halibut, although the fishery is open through September 29th most of them are out in the open ocean doing halibut things. Lingcod are closed for the season and our rockfish fishery continues on a longterm conservation closure... What do we fish for?

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Why not chase San Juan Island coho, the other red meat?

As always review the regulations and Emergency Regulation notices before heading out but the current season is modeled as being open as follows: 9/1-9/29 1 coho. When heading out to hunt San Juan Island Coho. make sure you are aware of the southeast MA 7 closure, and if you plan to fish the banks be cognizant of your actual location. Know where the Canadian border is and where both the MA 7 and MA 6 boundaries are.

Regarding regulations; this year there has been an increase in the number of WDFW staff Safety and Security Incident Reports filed for harassment of WDFW personnel. The Safety and Security Incident Reports relate to negative interactions with anglers and were submitted by Puget Sound Sampling staff over a two-month period this summer.

The negative interaction makes WDFW recruitment and retention difficult and staff have quit their job over the treatment they've received this summer.

As a participant in our recreational salmon fishery, please remember that the department is required to monitor the fishery.

#### RCW.77.12.071

#### SAMPLING OF FISH, WILDLIFE, OR SHELLFISH BY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES.

- (I) Department employees, in carrying out their duties under this title on public lands or state waters, may:
- (a) Collect samples of tissue, fluids, or other bodily parts of fish, wildlife, or shellfish; or
- (b) Board vessels in state waters engaged in commercial and recreational harvest activities to collect samples of fish, wildlife, or shellfish.
- (i) Department employees shall ask permission from the owner or his or her agent before boarding vessels in state waters.
- (ii) If an employee of the department is denied access to any vessel where access was sought for the purposes of (b) of this subsection, the department employee may contact an enforcement officer for assistance in applying for a search warrant authorizing access to the vessel in order to carry out the department employee's duties under this section.
- (2) Department employees must have official identification, announce their presence and intent, and perform their duties in a safe and professional manner while carrying out the activities in this section.

If they do not have the staffing or there are safety concerns, they may have to close a given fishery because they are unable to monitor it as required under the Federal Fisheries permit.

Once you've sorted through the regulations and generally know where you are going, what's the game plan? During Coho season a good chunk of MA 7 will have coho available. Many of the points along the SW side of San Juan Island produce tide rips that will concentrate bait. Find the bait and coho will be there. This time of the year coho put on the feed bag and fatten up for their spawning

rituals. Instead of naming off several already busy point fisheries think bait.

Generally, coho will be found anywhere there is bait. Meter around offshore from the point fisheries and look for bait. Study your charts and note any high spots or ridges that will create a current break and have a look. You don't need to find a boiling tide rip, even a subtle rolling seam along an otherwise glassy sea will hold bait. Look for seabirds, a bunch of diving birds sitting on the water means deep bait. a flock of gulls, either floating around or on the wing usually means shallow bait, so continuously keep

a lookout for birds. They are kind of the blue light special for coho fishing. Although fishing with the flotilla puts a lot of coho on ice each year, consider finding fish outside the masses. The key to locating coho is locating the bait, find the bait and you will find coho.

One previous September morning, after a quick stop at Holiday for nonethanol and a freshly made breakfast burrito I was off to Cornet Bay.

On arrival, I found the bay glassy calm with no wind and was in the water in no time. Fishing with good friends we had agreed to meet at 5:30. I visited with my dock mate and readied the boat and gear for our adventure. 5:30 sharp a set of headlights signals my guests' arrival and we were on the way shortly thereafter. We were handed a gift; the water was dead calm as we motored our way through the predawn darkness. We planned to fish for coho in the Eagle Point area along the south side of San Juan Island. The point was really crowded so I headed offshore to look for bait.



We found a very subtle current break with a number of diving birds sitting on it. Although I had three downriggers onboard, one had problems so we were running 2 and focused on chasing meter marks. We would be rotating through hookups. With very few other boats around we went gear down and started the hunt.

Running only two downriggers turned out to be a blessing because we were on fire. Every hookup turned into a double.

Enjoying nonstop action, we had two people fighting



fish and one on net duty (2 nets onboard) as we cycled through our rotation. When it was over we had lost about 10 or 12 fish, released a number of fat wild fish but still got easy limits of 8# - mid-teens coho.

It was a stellar day of coho fishing and other than some sore arms my guests had an absolute blast. It was one of the best coho days I have ever experienced. Although I was the skipper, I give credit for our success to a handful of diving birds sitting on a tide rip.

Although many coho are caught on the surface with

a cut-plug herring or on trolling flies MA 7 coho are a downrigger show. While most days there is a butt crack of dawn surface bite and occasionally during the day you'll get a fish with weight or a diver running at 33 pulls, downriggers are a must. Downriggers allow you to target feeding fish.

Regarding gear, probably not a popular opinion, but I think that MA 7 coho are brainless feeding machines. Once they move into the inner sound, they are more selective maybe even smart. In the straights, they focus on their next meal.









**GET'EM WITH THE GOAT!** 







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We have caught coho that were either barfing up small herring or had a number of herring tails sticking out of their mouths, yet they had just snarfed down a hoochie/ flasher rig.

You can't go wrong with a flasher/hoochie of a flasher/spoon combo. Some version of green or chartreuse would be my starting point but if presented correctly almost any color will work. Many other lures will work too. Consider an Old Goat Lure. a herring or anchovy in a helmet, hoochie/Wigalefin Action Disc combo or even a spinner/bait rig. While coho fishing I always run 11" flashers and the color will vary depending on what the fish want the day that I am fishing.

The day that I took my friends out we found huge schools of small bait so we sized our flies and spoons accordingly.

We were running 32-34" of 30# fluorocarbon leaders with a 20' setback from the clip. All our fish were caught with between 60' and 140' of cable out while trolling at 3.2-4.0 mph. The flies we were using were 2 barbless hook rigs and I tipped the lead hook with salted herring strips. The spoons were lathered up with either anchovy or herring goo and also ran on 32-34" leaders.

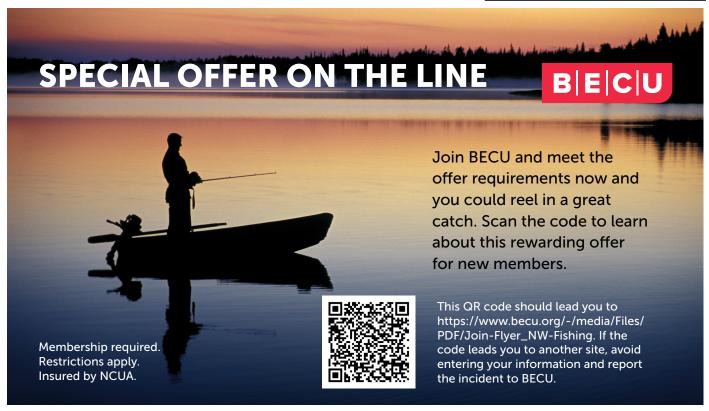
I want to address the MA 7 weather. I work 5 to 6 days a week on the water in MA 7. While working in the San Juans last year I encountered a significant squall line of thunderstorms. Basically, the weather went from summer boating weather to "what the heck" in minutes. It was windy, pouring icy rain/hail, and very dark. Then the thunder was relentless and deafening.

Coho season falls while our typical summer boating weather is transitioning to an unsettled weather pattern. Most of the time the sea conditions will be very pleasant. But be aware of and prepared for changing conditions. If the forecast is questionable don't go, or at least proceed with caution. A 15-mph wind against a running tide can be uncomfortable or even dangerous. Especially as you depart/approach Deception Pass/Cornet Bay, a key launch area for MA 7 coho. Know the limits of both your boat and crew, and have properly fitting life vests

for each person on board and the required safety equipment. Make sure that you have adequate fuel on board, with the longer runs to the fishing grounds and the potential for inclement weather this is not the fishery to play chicken with your fuel gauge. Always err on the cautious side.

Have a game plan for caring for your catch. It will be different for each skipper but have a fish bonker, a bleed bucket, or divers clip and ice available. Once you determine you have a legal fish in the net, stun it to prevent bruising.





Then tear or cut a gill, bleed the fish, and get them on ice as soon as they are bled out.

Coho are excellent table fare when properly cared for.

Good luck in your quest to catch a box full of San Juan fall coho. It is an ideal family fishery. They are relatively easy to find, usually hungry, and have some serious shoulders. Pack plenty of snacks (no bananas), watch the weather and think safety. Good times and you will find your freezer full of the other red meat, San Juan Islands coho!



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## **■** Jones Sport Fishing





Timing is everything, especially in fishing. As fishers, we do our best to utilize our logarithmic math skills to factor bait, tackle, gear, equipment, safety, weather, time, and environment. Sprinkle on a little bit of hope and you may have a recipe to catch the infamous Canadian Tuna like we did last August in Zeballos, BC in Canada with Reel Obsession Sport Fishing. Nearly a year in the making, last August, we headed out of Spokane to Vancouver Island.

Me, Rob, and our two daughters, Cameron and Sarah, headed out on the 700 mile-2 day trip to Zeballos. We had our passports, bibs, maps, lodging itinerary, ferry tickets, snacks, coolers and a navigation plan. We set out to BC hoping to catch the infamous BC Tuna.

Our hopes multiplied as we left Spokane. Rob had been on the horn with Adrian of Reel Obsession and the scuttlebutt was that our timing was right for Tuna.

We planned on fishing for Salmon, Halibut, and Bottom fish and the idea of Tuna was a BONUS. All factors were adding up to ideal conditions. The water temperature was right, and the weather was cooperating. Adrian and his fleet were in the Tuna between 20 and 40 miles out when we left Spokane. Our imaginations ran wild as we drove. Would we get there in time? Now, our girls are seasoned on the Salt, and they can travel



independently abroad. They were ready for this trip. Their skills would be put to use and pushed. Their mental toughness was developed. They had their own gear, and their stamina was up. The time was right for them to go 40 miles out to sea for a long grinding day of hauling in up to 20 tuna per person as the limit.

It took a while at the border. We were the last truck that loaded the ferry on the last boat of the night. (Planning for this is key. Any delays may affect your ferry sailing)

We got into Nanaimo late and grabbed a hotel. We set out early for Zeballos on the 4-hour drive. We hit a few stores on the way. Zeballos has one small store that is open with limited hours and limited supply. grab your niceties on the way. Angie, Adrian's wife and Operations Manager, had everything dialed for us upon arrival. Our rooms were great. The main lodge was bustling. Folks gathered around the firepit with a glass of wine to soak up the views while being contentful waiting for dinner. Sitting down for

dinner, the buzz was in, the Tuna were still here! We would be getting our shot at the Tuna Dance!

The morning was met with a communal breakfast and lunch coolers to tote. The scene of the fleet of boats heading out together was a sight to revel in. My girls soaked in the scenery as they gazed with wonder at the open sea. We went 40 miles out. Not all the fleet, but a handful of us Reel Obsession boats were working together over the horn. The radio chimed pleasantries rarely heard over the com in Washington waters. Like, "Lookin' good aye?" and "Great job, aye!" BC fishers are some of the nicest. hardworking folks I've met.

We get to the grounds and Adrian shows the girls the ropes. Essentially, he shows them how to dance for Tuna in a brief 2-minute. tutorial. We started to move as a team. We were trolling at about 7 knots fishing with rods and reels and hand lines. Level lines and hand lines are productive and fast; and less awkward than a rod and reel when trolling. "The hand lines help keep the trolling speed up." Adrian had said. The girls got into it.

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REEL OBSESSION IS A FAMILY OPERATION, ADRIAN, AND HIS WIFE ANGIE. OWN AND OPERATE THE LODGE ALONGSIDE THEIR TWO CHILDREN, ANGIE RUNS THE LAND PART AS THE OPERATION MANAGER AND ADRIAN RUNS THE MARINE SIDE BAS OPERATIONS MANAGER. KEEGAN, THEIR SON WORKS ON 335 THE DOCKS AND IN PROCESSING AND KENZIE HELPS SERVE AND OPERATIONS IN THE LODGE \*REEL OBSESSION IS AN ALI-INCLUSIVE FISHING **VACATION LODGE, PACKAGES** INCLUDE LODGING, ALL MEALS, SNACKS, BEVERAGES, AND GUIDED FISHING. THEY ARE A LICENSED PROCESSING FACILITY AND PROCESS AND VACUUM SEAL ALL OUR FISH. "IT'S ALWAYS A HALIBUT AND SALMON TRIP BUT IF THE WATER TEMPS ARE RIGHT. THEN WE CAN GET OUT FOR TUNA!" -ADRIAN O'CONNELL



The handlines helped keep their stamina up. We grinded all day, with not a moment to spare. Adrian was incredible at teaching the girls new techniques, picking up slack when the girls felt a wave of fatigue. Rob and Adrian pulled in the extra slack that day. Mentors are good like that. We grabbed snacks as our energy slowed. Angle and the staff had prepared a delicious lunch for fuel and endurance. We brought in around 40 Tuna! It was incredible! It was rigorous, it was hard, it was fun and It was the time of our lives!

We headed in with the other "Reel" boat that was out. We got to the dock, exhausted. Ange and her team were waiting for us to offload and begin processing. They laid out all the tuna from both boats for some pictures. It was glorious! We headed up to the lodge to get cleaned up and ready ourselves for dinner while the Reel

Obsession Crew got to work.

We fished for 3 more days. The fishing was great. The girls wanted to fish for halibut, so we fished in the rain at 300 ft and let them do most of the reeling. We caught our fair share of salmon and some bottom fish. Each day the crew would do the same and offload our catch and get to work while we sat reminiscing about the day in comfort as we soaked in the company and scenery.

We headed out early in the morning with our fish packaged and ready to go for the border. We spent an extra day in Vancouver to play around. We headed home the next day in a straight 8-hour shot. Looking back, Sarah recalls, "The food, scenery, and the people are extraordinary! Zeballos is Awesome!" I agree with her. It was the time of our lives!



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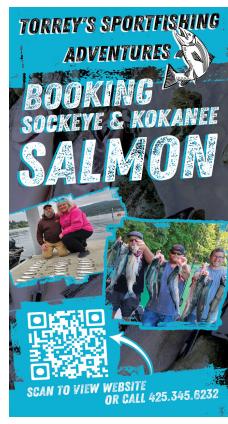
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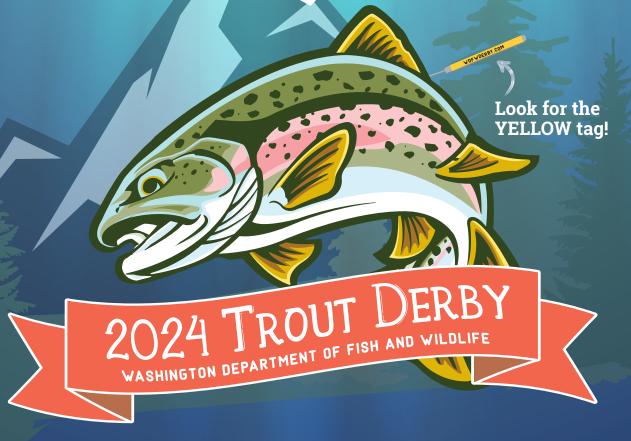
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