

FLY LINES

Official eJournal of the
BC Federation of Fly Fishers

ISSUE №3 | FALL 2023

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PICKING A "FISHING BRAIN"

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Join Us!

TODAY IN OUR MISSION

to conserve and protect BC's sport fisheries

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The BC Federation of Fly Fishers (BCFFF) is a registered, non-profit society whose main objective is to promote the conservation of the fishing environment in British Columbia. By networking with similarly minded clubs, organizations, businesses and individuals, the BCFFF provides a voice that reflects its members' and the public's concern for the future of BC's natural resources.

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Cover Photo: Shawn Brown



Myles Armstead

President's Message

**"Best of all he loved the fall
the leaves yellow on the cottonwoods
leaves floating on the trout streams
and above the hills the high blue windless skies...
now he will be a part of them forever."
(Ernest Hemingway)**

Like most of us that find joy on an autumn river bank — this quote resonates. Yet today, I find that the ebbing days of summer don't bring the same level of anticipation and excitement they once did. Instead, there is a general melancholy, a yearning for my angling past, when I could borrow Dad's land cruiser, drive to the Thompson and fish for those special steelhead.

Recently, I was asked by someone who is an avid skier about steelhead and steelhead fishing. I said to them — imagine living in the best place in the world to ski and you find yourself living through winters of less and less snow. Eventually you spend your winters looking at brown mountain slopes with continuous rain.

This is quickly becoming reality for BC's devout steelhead anglers.

Now the last great stronghold of wild steelhead in BC, the Skeena, is under serious threat. Is it possible to transition to selective fisheries, stop the south east Alaskan by catch, limit the mortality of C and R fisheries by imposing limits on both catch and access? A well-known biologist said to me once that in order to save Thompson River Steelhead "everyone is going to need to give up something" and this applies

as well to the Skeena watershed and any stream that is fortunate to have a remnant population of fish. We as conservation minded fly fishers must look inwards — not just point fingers at others.

The BCFFF has been hard at work since our last issue of Flylines with different levels of government, including FN and various NGOs to help bring about the change that we hope will protect what is left of our wild steelhead population. This is a time-consuming process, but thanks to the hard work of our directors — things seem to be slowly changing.

As well, we will be relaunching the BCFFF website in the upcoming months (<https://www.bcfff.bc.ca/>) and will be conducting our first online auction, streamlining our Conservation Trust funds (special thanks to Ken Marsh who is heading this committee), and partnering with FN on both conservation and fly-fishing education programs.

Should you have any ideas you wish to bring to the BCFFF please feel free to reach out to me directly at mylesarmstead007@gmail.com. We are also looking for new directors and/or volunteers for our committees. I wish you all a fabulous fall fishing season.

Myles Armstead

President of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers



Brian Smith

Editor's Report

Wow! Am I ever stoked to bring to our BCFFF members and readers another issue of Flylines! Our focuses in this issue are steelhead on the dry fly and beach fishing for cutthroat, Coho and pink salmon, plus whatever else happens to attach to a fly when you are on the beach.

We are ecstatic with our growing club participation in Flylines. This issue will have reports from seven of our twelve clubs and a feature article on the Comox Valley Flyfishers, one of the largest and most diverse clubs in the province. Hats off to CVFF for what they do! And to all of our fly clubs for helping us to make the resurgence of Flylines a reality.

Art Lingren, BCFFF historian, has submitted another superb article for us, this one about Austin Spencer, a.k.a. "Spent Spinner", who made the trek from Vancouver by train in the early 1900's to fish the Nickomekyl and Serpentine rivers of the Fraser Delta. Its like "old home" week for me; when I was a youngster of ten years old (circa mid-1950's) I used to bicycle from our farm on Sunnyside Road (now 24th Avenue) to the Nickomekyl Bridge with my line on a stick and a can of earthworms to fish for cutthroats, bullheads, and the odd prize Coho. Lots of nostalgia for me in this feature!

Our "Back Casts" feature is robbed from Flylines Winter 2016, and is a great article by Lloyd Erickson on the "Evolution of Fly Fishing for Pink Salmon." Lloyd is in declining health right now; we wish him peace, and thank him for his BCFFF involvement during many years of his life.

A poem "Shadow-casting" by John Beaton is a guest feature article for this issue. Myles passed this one to us, and if you are a fly-fisher in stage three, it should bring a tear to your eye...

A newcomer we have recruited to Flylines is world championships' Spey-casting competitor for Canada Kate Watson, a former member of Polar Coachman Flyfishers (she recently moved to 108 Mile) and neighbour of mine in Prince George when she was a teenager. Katy also operates a teaching school and guiding business (www.katewatsonflyfishing.com) and is interested in doing a regular column for us.

We welcome all she can share with us about Spey-fishing and her amazing adventures with a fly rod.

The fly-tying feature highlights skating dry flies for steelhead. I offer three winning patterns for this elusive but sought-after quarry for us stage three guys and gals. Jessea Grice and his 10-year-old son Wyatt share some of their photography for this article and also our photography pages.

When we "pick a fishing brain" we try to feature members who have the respect of all fly fishers, not only for who they are, but what they have contributed to the sport. The legendary Tom Murray has been in my awe for over fifty years, his "Murray's Rolled Muddler" one of the first fly patterns I tied back in the early 70's. Tom, now 85, tells all, and we read and learn from one of the true Masters of our game.

Rory Glennie is one of my "Flylines" heroes. Once again, he fills the destination pages of this issue with his knowledge, expertise and fine photography on "Fly-fishing the Beaches for Salmon."

Michael Barr is 1st VP of the BCFFF and chairs our BCFFF Steelhead Committee, which advocates for the preservation, conservation and protection of this fast-diminishing race of salmonids. In our Conservation feature, Michael's report lends a fly fisher's perspective and a keen insight into selective fishing processes, which your BCFFF Steelhead Committee believes will be the only salvation for protection of current gill net by-catches of steelhead and chinook by all commercial and First Nations users of the resource. This is a fine piece of journalism by Michael, and a must-read for everyone.

As always, we appreciate good photography, and welcome all members to submit their high-resolution photos for every reader of Flylines to enjoy.

Enjoy your publication!

Brian Smith, Editor

Club News/Reports

HAIG-BROWN

Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association

By Pat George, President

Our club, after curtailing two years of fish outs and meetings, is looking forward to its regular events and meetings beginning this fall. In May the HBFFA had its AGM, which was well attended, and the membership voted in a new executive. Margaret Greenway and her executive will be missed, and the club was very fortunate to have their great leadership, which held the group together through the Covid years. Our new board consists of: Pat George, President; John Braybrook, Vice Chair; Geoff Klassen, Treasurer; and Mohamed Docrat and Mike Edgel, Directors.

Conservation projects we were working on were curtailed during Covid. Members feel that these pending projects are once again worthy of our attention. Nature Trust is seeking funds to buy a large tract of land on

the Qualicum River, and the club voted in June to make a contribution to that project. The club was also approached by Southern Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition (SVIAC) to make a donation towards their legal challenge with DFO regarding business losses as a consequence of this year's additional restrictions imposed on Southern Resident Killer Whale and Chinook fishing industries. (<https://anglerscoalition.com>). They have set up a Go-Fund-Me site with a goal to raise \$100,000. Also, a donation of \$500.00 was made to support the Sooke Chinook Sea Pen project.

In June we had a couple of fish-outs that were very successful. The first was to Shawnigan

Lake, with coffee and hot dogs for lunch, and the second

was to the Gorge for sea-run cutthroat which resulted in new prospective members showing interest in joining the club. The most popular event of the year is our annual summer BBQ, which once again was a well-attended event. This event is a pot luck, which also has the members partners attend, and as usual, food was plentiful and delicious. This year we were fortunate to have "Finest at Sea" supply the fresh fish; they have the best sea food, bar none, in Victoria.

August is the start of the best beach fishing for salmon in our area, and most of the club members have headed up-Island to fish for pinks and Coho as pinks have made their appearance in the Campbell River vicinity, and are expected to be on the beaches and in the estuary shortly.

In September, we will see our first meeting for the New Year, and we will be hosting our annual Christmas dinner in December.

Tight lines everyone!

POLAR COACHMAN

Polar Coachman Flyfishers

By Jeff Kormos President

While the club breaks over the open-water season, we have been busy participating in a variety of fly fishing and conservation-promoting events. It has been a great summer of engaging with our regular community partners including the Spruce City Wildlife Association (SCWA) and BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) and forging new partnerships, for example, with our new friends at Canuck Place Children's Hospice Society (CPCHS). We are truly fortunate to be able to access so many great fishing opportunities, and we are all too happy to share our knowledge and passion with those who are interested in getting started.

We finished off our regular club activities in May with an open house at the SCWA Clubhouse. It was a very well attended event, where we held fly casting and fly tying demos, displayed a variety of personal watercraft and even brought in our fisheries biologists to discuss fish stocks, and fish counting in some of our most sensitive wild fish streams. I'd like to offer a special thanks to Glen Mikkelsen for making the arrangements and hosting such a successful event to promote the club and fly fishing. We even gained a couple of new members. We also participated in BCWF's "Becoming an Outdoors Women" event in Prince George, where we led a fly tying session for the

KALAMALKA

Kalamalka Flyfishers

By Bob Tait

The Kal Flyfishers members are currently in 'hiatus,' as summer sees most of us trying to get in some time on the water.

Our meetings officially end in June but we still managed to get a crew together July 16th at the Kingfisher Hatchery to work with those folks to put on a "Learn to Fish" program. The numbers were comparable to past years, with kids catching trout in the pond, introducing

them to fly tying & fly casting, teaching river safety, and some arts & crafts. The session is a lot of fun for our members, who help organize & support the Kingfisher staff.

At our June 2nd meeting we had the prize draw for our annual raffle. Because of the success of ticket sales the past 2 years, we increased the number of tickets to sell, and again sold out (2500 tickets): 1st prize is a custom built 9'6"

Sage X rod package with Reel, line & Sage rode case; 2nd prize is a custom built 9'6" Sage X rod & case; 3rd prize, a box of hand tied flies and a copy of our club-produced book "Flies & Fly Fishing Techniques for BC Interior Lakes".

We will kick off our fall season in early September with a club BBQ to get everyone back into the swing of things, and to start planning some of our upcoming projects. We hope everyone had an enjoyable summer, and were not adversely affected by the wildfires that ravaged the province.

participants. Again, a special thanks to club Treasurer Erich Franz for his leadership and skillful tutelage. Participants were able to tie a variety of flies that are productive in the waters of our region.

In June, we hosted a BCWF "Fishing Forever" with our friends at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. It was our first event since COVID restrictions put our extracurricular activities on hold. Despite the rain and wet weather, the turnout was great and the participants got into multiple fish. The burgers and smokies were a big hit, much thanks to Lisa, Anita and Ruth for putting on a super spread and entertaining our guests as the guys took turns rotating the boats and fishing with the CNIB gang. Another special thanks to past president Brian Smith for leading and hosting this event. And of course, a special shout out to Vivian Lake Resort for their gracious gift of use of their boat launch and day use area.

In August, we met up with our new friends from CPCHS. Vivian Lake hosted us at their day use area again, and we had a stellar show from the club's members to volunteer their time, knowledge and equipment. We started off on a very foggy morning, with a lake surface resembling glass. Our participants and hosts from CPCHS got out early and had some decent summer action. Thanks to Gillian and Laura for arranging participants and coming up to Prince George for the event. Thanks to Dustin Snyder and our friends at the SCWA for their help and for supplying the food and refreshments. It was a great start to a new friendship, and we

look forward to meeting up with them again next year.

Pandemic restrictions prevented us from gathering for events and giving back to the community over the past few years. As we were able to meet in person this year, we realized just how important connection is to each of us, and to the Club in general. We were quite ambitious in our intentions to volunteer this year, as we hosted more events this summer than usual. This is a testament to the members and their willingness to give back and work together to promote fly fishing to people who may never had the chance to try it, and to make fly fishing more accessible. I would like to thank all of our members this year who gave their time, equipment and expertise to make sure that others can enjoy this thing we do, with all the passion and excitement we have, while we spend our summers wading or floating on our favourite waters.

OSPREY

Osprey Fly

By Bruce Brandhorst

In April, Ospreys manned the raffle booth at the Michael and Young Spey Clave at Cultus Lake, which raised about \$10,000, which was split between the BCFFF and Steelhead Society of BC.

Several Ospreys attended the BCFFF AGM at Corbett Lake Lodge. We arrived the day of ice-off, and enjoyed excellent fishing for trout that survived the winter in great shape, in contrast to many BC lakes that suffered winter kills due to oxygen starvation. We enjoyed the AGM, especially Brian Smith's presentation on the Stellako River.

A couple of weeks later we had a multiday fish-out at Tunkwa Lake. Fishing was challenging, but the fish were in prime condition. Those fishing Leighton Lake fared better.

Fishers

In June we had our annual casting tune-up session led by Pete Caverhill and a fish-out at Knouff Lake Resort. While many trout were caught, they tended to be thin, although fishing at nearby Community Lake resulted in some good catches of large trout on chironomids and attractors. The new management at the resort facilitated an excellent pot luck dinner.

Our members await the beginning of stream fishing for pink and coho salmon with concern about stream flows and temperatures, and look forward to regular face-to-face meetings resuming in September.

Osprey's Knouff Lake Fishout



Club News/Reports

TOTEMS

Totems Flyfishers Club

By Lorenzo Cirillo

The Totems have had a very successful year thus far, with several club outings that have included the Harrison River, Squamish River, Vedder River and Peterhope Lake. And, as I write this update, the second of four groups from the club have made their way into our annual excursion to the Dean River. Outings have been well attended by our senior members as well as new members, although there have not been many fish for the effort put in during our river outings. I think it is safe to say that the good attendance is inspired by a delicious hot lunch consistently prepared by our outing's coordinator, Noah Cantor. Members have also enjoyed some productive trips to the interior lakes for trout this spring and summer. Fall will see the club focusing on fall runs of salmon that hopefully materialize in greater numbers than past years.

Our meetings involve some type of entertainment or presentation after dinner. So far, we have had a presentation on the how to and where to for chasing bonefish in the Bahamas by member Rudy Morzanowski, and an extremely informative presentation on 'The Heart of the Fraser' by Ken Ashley, who chairs the Rivers Institute. As well, the club hosted an auction back in April where members donate their old gear articles and have them re-purposed and sold to another member or guest. We have a number of exceptional fly tiers in the club who also donated boxes of their gorgeous creations to help the club, which we will use to support organizations and initiatives that work towards conservation of fish and their habitats in British Columbia.

Tight Lines,
Lorenzo Cirillo



Peter Caverhill photo credit

KAMLOOPS

Kamloops Fly Fishers

By Len Piggin President

As I write this, in Kamloops the smoke is so thick I can't see Mts. Paul & Peter. We just had our Executive Meeting and we're getting the KFF program going for the fall. We haven't scheduled any fish-outs yet, but for the first time Kamloops is in a category 5 drought situation, and the Ross Moore wildfire has closed the entire Lac Le Jeune Provincial Park area.

On our agenda for our September monthly meeting, but not confirmed yet, is our Regional Senior Biologist will talk about Kamloops area winter kills in our world-famous lakes. Also, David Lambroughton, world famous fly-fishing photographer and publisher of the Fly-Fishing Dreams calendars that we covet so much, will be attending our

October Fly Tying 101/Method Session.

Our annual rod building email has gone out to the Membership. Freshwater kits are \$275.00, which includes blank, guides, thread, premium corks and the rod building lesson. I will put these rods up against any rods I sold at Wholesale Sports for \$800.00 plus. We usually have classes of fifteen members, and already have five that have decided what they want and are eager to get at it. Classes start in November and finish in January.

We will be asking the membership for dues increase this year. We currently have 75 members, and dues are: regular \$50.00; family \$65.00. Our recommendation is to raise each group by \$10.00.

The World Fly Fishing Championship will be held on Kamloops area lakes from September 24th to 30th with many members including myself volunteering to organize and help at the events.

LOONS

The Loons Fly Fishing Club

By Rick Bozwell

The summer of has provided the club some good fishing opportunities. Although our early-season outing to the Thompson was cancelled due to the horrific flooding in and around Cache Creek, a few of us are heading there in August for the excellent trout fishing the Thompson provides at that time of year.

In June, club members travelled to Hihium Lake to seek its legendary caddis hatches, which proved to be an adventure, and then to Hope for an outing on the Skagit. Water conditions were not surprising...low and crystal clear.



IN MEMORY

REMEMBERING HERMANN FISCHER

Speaking as President of the Kamloops Fly Fishers Association, our motto is “members helping members”, and Hermann exemplified this axiom to a “T”. Hermann would present at all of our Fly Tying 101/Method Sessions if I let him, but our club is about all of the membership. When Hermann tied flies, he would not only tie the fly, but also provide us with some of his unending humour.

Herman was a creative and innovator fly tier, and when presenting he would bring enough materials to tie the fly for everyone attending his session. He never asked for money...he gave freely of his knowledge and expertise. He gave tools, materials and insights to his fly patterns spontaneously; he didn't just tie a fly, he explained how and where to use the pattern. He wanted you to be successful. That was his reward.

When Hermann spoke, everyone listened. He had command of the floor, whether it was giving a tip to the members at a monthly meeting, or during a break at one of our fly-tying sessions.

In the classic book by Art Lingren *Contemporary Fly Patterns of British Columbia*, pages 57–60 are presented by Hermann. He is an Honorary Member of the KFFA, which is the highest honour bestowed on a member.

Hermann was not selfish with his knowledge; because of this, our “Fly of the Month” award, given by the President to a club member, will be renamed the “Hermann Fischer Fly of the Month Award”. This award is given for many different reasons, but the main reason is to say “thank you” to someone who gives their time and expertise freely by helping people.

The KFFA will surely miss Hermann Fischer, and the fly-fishing community will miss him deeply as well.

Tight lines.

Leonard P. Piggitt
President KFFA

IN THE BEGINNING...

History by Rory Glennie

At the time, John Snook was Supervisor for the Municipal Parks department of the City of Courtenay. John and a few others in that department thought it was about time Courtenay had an established fly fishing club. So, they spread the word by fly fisher's bush telegraph that a club was in the offing. Being city staff, it was easy for them to arrange a city owned meeting space — fee gratis.

In March of 1994 a loose-knit group of fly fishers came together to form what would eventually be called, the Comox Valley Fly Fishers club. The inaugural meeting took place in a small room at the Courtenay Recreation Association facility in Courtenay.

In attendance were the following; John Snook, Jim Cunning, Ralph Shaw, Robert H. "Bob" Jones, Barry Thornton, Rory Glennie, Tom Murray, Dan Mooney, Bob Foster and a couple more people, who's names are waiting to be remembered. This small group could be considered the Founding Fathers of the club.

Each person kicked in twenty dollars as their initial club member dues and a quick election was held. John Snook became the first duly elected President of the new fly fishing club. Dan Mooney sat as Secretary/Treasurer. Four or five others donned the mantle of club Directors. It was official, the Comox Valley Fly Fishers club was alive.

Jim Cunning took on the task of designing a club logo which was emblematic of the Comox Valley. That turned out to be a stylized fly-fisher casting a fly line over the waters of Comox Bay, with the Comox glacier — Queneesh — in the background.

The purpose of the new fly club was solely focused on camaraderie, education and sharing information. Promoting the fun of fly fishing to prospective newcomers was a big part of the CVFF club objective. Each of the founders were long time members of various organizations which were active in the factionalized fisheries political arena. They all saw the need for a truly social club of like-minded folks; people who could leave the fish politics, and all that entailed, at the door. They wanted to establish a relaxed atmosphere at club meetings where all members could share and laugh and exchange ideas without hesitation. That



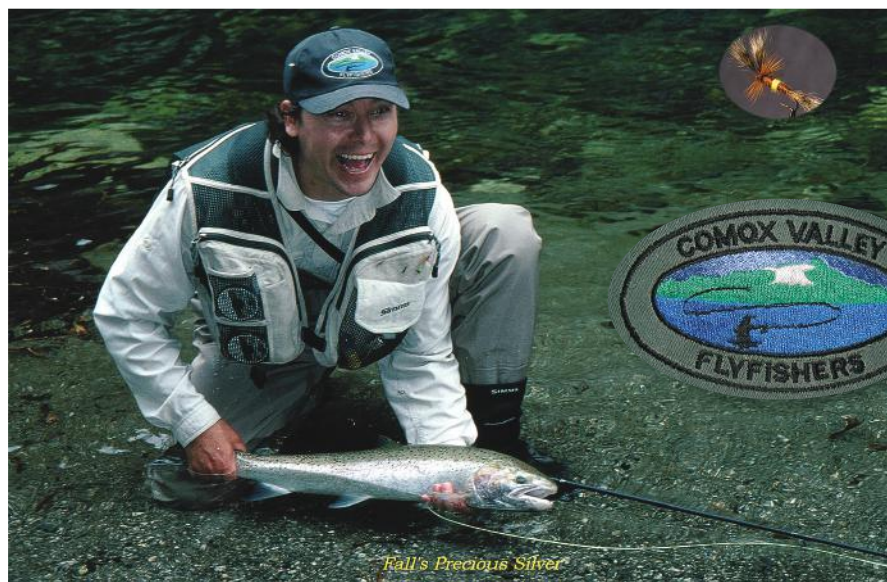
goal was realised and happily continues to this day, nearly three decades later. To formalize things, the Comox Valley Fly Fishers club was officially registered under the BC Societies Act on June 18th.,1996.

The CVFF club roster is well populated; with consistently 100 or more dues paying members for the past several years. As with any club, member attrition takes its toll, but every year the club seems to pick up enough new members to offset any loss. And the societal range of folks joining varies widely, including a few juniors.

Annual Christmas get-togethers, scheduled fly tying sessions — with technique assistance for those requesting; club sponsored fish-outs and hot-dog BBQs; annual fly-casting in the park gatherings where public participation is encouraged; kids fishing day at a local trout pond; and so much more, but you get the picture. Another forward-thinking initiative which came about was the establishment of a Comox Valley Fly Fishers club webpage. In Word Press™ format, this site allows members to post fishing reports, stories, informational articles and the like, complete with photos. Sections on archived club meeting minutes, discussion forum, items for sale, club roster, book/video library etc. are there too. All with the intent of maintaining open lines of communication between members.

The CVFF club's current, multi-term President, Dean Hodgson has successfully lead members through those difficult COVID 19 pandemic years, and is well on his way to leading the club into future success. The Comox Valley Fly Fishers club is a long-time supporter of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers.

CVFF Club Member with Summer-run Steelhead



HISTORY

PRESERVING AN HISTORIC DOCUMENT — A HANDY GUIDE FOR FISHERMEN

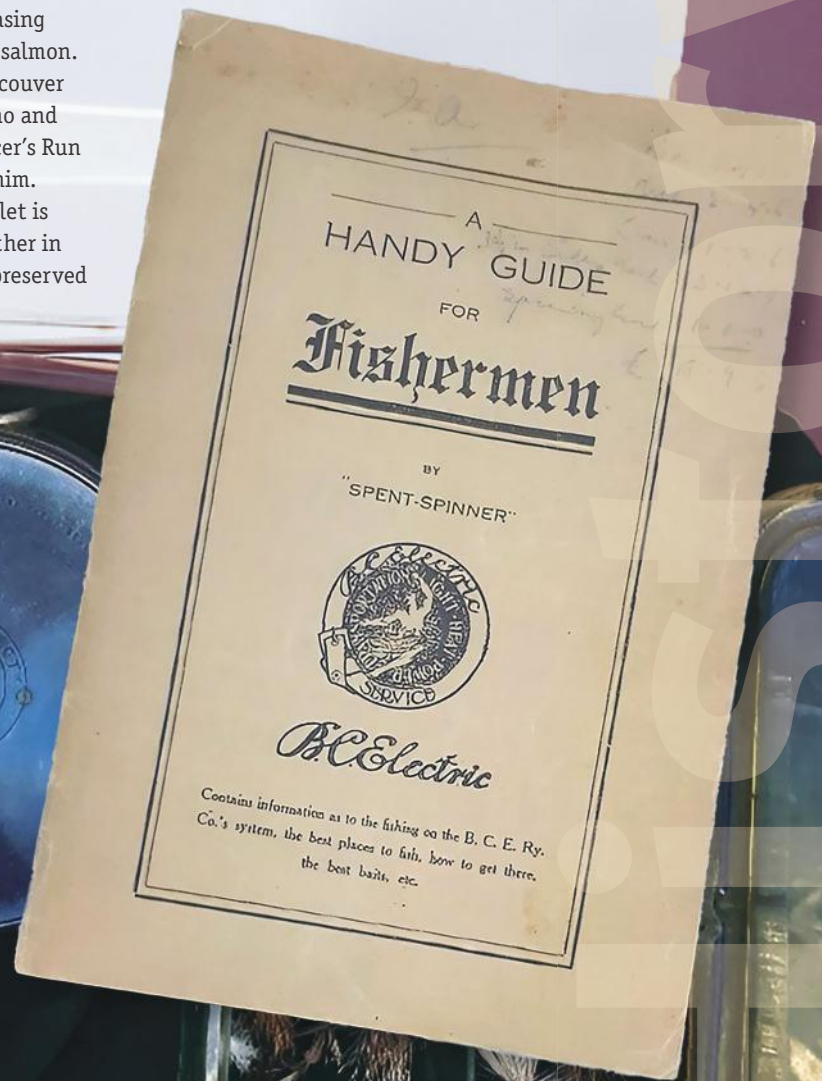
Article by Art Lingren

Some years ago, a package arrived in the mail from Gary Cutler of the Kamloops Fly Fishers. It contained a short booklet *A Handy Guide for Fishermen* by "Spent Spinner" published by the B. C. Electric Company in 1918. Gary sent it to me for safe keeping as he was looking for a loving home for it.

It is the first where-to-fish and hunt publication for North Shore and southern Fraser Valley streams in British Columbia. A Bryan Williams' *Rod & Creel in British Columbia* published in 1919 covers much of the accessible parts of the province while Spent Spinner's book is specific to the lower mainland up to Chilliwack that anglers accessed by the company's rail lines. We certainly didn't have the road and bridge systems we have today and to fish Surrey streams for example the train left from Vancouver starting at 5 a.m. and every 20 minutes thereafter and you would get off at a station near the Serpentine River, Johnson's Creek or Nicomekl River and spend the day

wandering up and down the stream and get a train later in the day to return home. Those streams held healthy populations of salmon and cutthroat trout. Austin G. Spencer a.k.a. "Spent Spinner," the author, was an ardent angler and offered guide trips to the Vedder River. Later in life he worked at *The Vancouver Sun* writing a garden column. His great grandson Scott Baker-McGarva follows in his footsteps chasing and guiding steelhead and salmon. Spencer lived in North Vancouver and frequented the Capilano and to this day there is a Spencer's Run on that river named after him. Spent Spinner's short booklet is a rare item. I know of no other in existence and I wanted it preserved

and intend to donate it to the UBC Library. Because it is rare, I asked Gwen Kushner to produce a suitable binding that would make it a better addition to the library. When I left it with her in Campbell River my instructions were to bind it and do a slip case with a door. She made the slip case with door but decided rather than fix the booklet firmly in a hard cover she made a hard folder with a sleeve that the booklet fits into. It is a fine example of the book binder's craft and for now Spencer's little booklet has a special place in my library.



Evolution for Fly-Fishing

pink salmon

By Lloyd Erickson

I was introduced to fishing for pink salmon on the Eve River sometime in the late 1970's, sometimes referred to as "the good old days". We dedicated a few days around the full moon in August for our fishing trip because of a predictable daytime low tide.

We particularly enjoyed fishing in the river and fished downriver on the falling tide, then back as the tide returned. On the low slack tide we would get maybe an hour's fishing at the river mouth or along the

Fiberglass rods were still in vogue in those days. My go-to rod was nine feet, throwing an 8-weight line. I used a floating line with a fairly long leader, but also used a couple of slow sinking lines with maybe a 7 foot leader. I used about 4 or

last resort was simply a hot pink (cerise) fly with a slim steelhead wool body and wing, usually a size 4, but maybe smaller. We had caught pink salmon while trolling in the saltchuck, but usually always incidentally to other salmon species we were targeting.

Of course, the commercial fishermen used pink hootchies when trolling for pinks. So we didn't get much guidance from other fishing experiences as to what patterns of fly we might use. We only "knew" that pinks fed mainly on krill and other "pink feed".

Fishing pressure on the Eve River was a tad less in those days; we might meet a half dozen or so other fishermen. Pink salmon weren't as "worthy" as other salmon. They were smaller, they had pale flesh, and since most were caught using heavy trolling gear, weren't considered strong fighters. Popular outdoor magazines such as *Western Fish*



beach. Of course pink salmon were considered "commercial species" and we could not fish for nor keep them upstream of the tidal boundary signs.

5 patterns of flies back then, what a change from now! Some of the other fishermen used 7 weight or even 6-weight rods/lines. The fly of first and

THE HANDFUL OR SO FISHERMEN WHO HAD DISCOVERED THIS SHANGRI LA OF FISHING IN A RIVER OR ON THE BEACH AT THE NICEST TIME OF YEAR KEPT IT SECRET AND ENJOYED VERY LITTLE COMPETITION!



and Game and the Environment didn't enlighten us on patterns to use. Articles about beach fishing were usually about cutthroat trout or coho salmon. The handful or so fishermen who had discovered this Shangri La of fishing in a river or on the beach at the nicest time of year kept it secret and enjoyed very little competition!

However, the fun of beach fishing did start to gain in popularity as fishermen discovered other river mouths where pink salmon congregated. Rivers such as the Keogh, Cluxewe, Oyster, and Nile Creek became known. Stores catering to sportsfishermen started to carry specialized gear. New materials allowed development of rods and lines that could cast farther. Perhaps one of the biggest changes has been in the flies that we use.

There are several reasons for the veritable explosion in the number and variety of fly patterns being tied and purchased for pursuing pink salmon. One reason is the relatively large numbers of new fishermen becoming involved in this fishery. This has created a lot of demand for new flies from suppliers. It has spawned a gush of new fly fishing articles in local magazines such as *Island Fisherman* with authors sharing their new patterns. Another reason is a flytying desk full of new materials. These include a litany of material derived from mylars,

plastics, tubing, artificial hair, chenille substitutes and sheet materials. Beads are a category of fly making material that has a huge variety of its own, including various metal beads and plastic beads, with many new colours and finishes. For any one pattern you can tie it with no bead, a shiny plastic bead or a heavy metal bead. You can further customize this pattern by choosing different sizes of beads, and different sizes of hooks.

Finally, there are a large number of styles of flies that work. You might call them *families* of flies. Some examples are Clousers, California Buggers, streamers and krill imitations. The pretty obvious result is that my collection of pink salmon flies can no longer be carried in just a couple of fly boxes!

The irony is that pink salmon will bite on almost any of these new patterns; they are not very fussy. So you don't really need a vest full of fly boxes. You need only **one fly**, best in a variety of sizes!



THE IRONY IS THAT PINK SALMON WILL BITE ON ALMOST ANY OF THESE NEW PATTERNS THEY ARE NOT VERY FUSSY



Shadow-casting

A POEM BY JOHN BEATON

Shadow-casting*

**Cast your line toward the sun
And let your shadow fall behind you.
Face the glare, absorb its stun,
And cast your line toward the sun
For casting shade makes wild things run;
So face the brightness though it blind you —
Cast your line toward the sun
And let your darkness fall behind you.**

* The poem has been previously published in Gray's Sporting Journal and Eyes on BC magazine.

Notes (in John's own words as written to Myles Armstead):

"It's often said that fly-fishing is about much more than the fish — that it has **mystical**, or at least meditative aspects. This little poem illustrates how my fly-fishing thoughts one day wandered from the river-bank to an inspiration — that we leave the problems of the past behind and make the best of the future.

The title echoes a term from the book and subsequent movie *A River Runs Through It*. Away from the river Brad Pitt may have become a hellion but, on the water, he's a magician. Supposedly, by casting repeatedly in the air, he can make the trout think a hatch of flies is taking place. It's a dubious concept, but the term suits the way light and fly-casting can take on a metaphorical significance."



John Beaton

Bio

John Beaton is a lifelong fly fisher who writes and recites Metrical poetry. Raised on the banks of the river Beauty in the Scottish Highlands, he lives in Qualicum Beach near the Little Qualicum River on Vancouver Island. You can find more of his work online by Googling "John Beaton poetry."

10 TIPS TO BECOME A BETTER SPEY CASTER AND ANGLER

By Kate Watson



Kate Watson

Spey casting has changed inherently over the years with the perpetual introduction of new technologies in rod design, line evolution and casting philosophies. There seems to be a plethora of choices for the consumer today, each targeting a different demographical mindset; a results based angler may lean towards a Skagit set up, whereas an angler who values traditional methodology may lean towards a long line set up; neither one superior to the latter.

Distinct from casting preference and rod choice, there are some universal tips to help you become a better caster on the water. These are a matter of basic fundamentals that are applicable to all casting styles. Learning to diagnose your cast and fishing strategy on

the water comes with time spent on the river, practice and heaps of mistakes. However, it can quickly turn those days around when nothing seems to be lining up. Often times when I find myself in a casting rut, I go through a quick reset where I completely reel in my line, (sometimes, if it's bad enough, all the way through the guides) and restart. I have a mental checklist in my head that walks through each casting point and I start diagnosing each step.

1. Your Anchor Tells All
2. Keep Line Tension: Slack is Your Enemy
3. Choose the Right Set Up
4. Slow Down
5. Watch Your Cast Form
6. Less Top Hand
7. Fish the Dangle
8. End High: Stop at the Tree Tops
9. Start with a Shotgun Lift
10. Remember Perfect Casting is Different than Fishing

Photos Kate Watson





1. Your Anchor Tells All

More times than not, your anchor will tell you everything that went wrong in your cast. Your anchor is where your line and/or leader makes contact with the water and holds tension. This tension point loads the rod, so that your line does not go straight back as in single hand casting. Too little of an anchor results in a small D-loop and less load, or too much line down results in too much stick and will feel incredibly heavy to

pull it off the water. If you listen closely, you will be able to hear the difference as the line leaves the water. A quick kiss to the water and your cast will feel effortless, but a loud slurping sound will immediately show you something went wrong. Learn to watch your anchor from formation to forward cast, looking for placement, sound and water movement after its been casted forward.

2. Keep Line Tension

Slack will always be your enemy in fly fishing, from cast to retrieve. Your line acts as a direct waypoint between you and a potential fish so keep your line taught throughout the entirety of the cast, swing, retrieve and reeling in a fish. I always tell students to imagine casting with a limp spaghetti noodle and think of how much control they have to get that noodle to go anywhere

they want. You need to create water resistance and tension to load the rod into a D-loop (or backcast). If you notice a lack of tension, check where you lost it. Is it in the formation of the D-loop? If so, potentially you have to add a lift or drift at the end, or watch that you are not creeping forward before your D-loop has fully formed.

You notice a lack of tension?
Check where you lost it!



A fly fisherman is shown in silhouette on the left, casting a long, thin line that arcs across the upper half of the frame. The background is a bright, hazy sunset over a river, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a golden glow. The water reflects the light, and there are some reeds or grasses in the foreground.

3. Choose the Right Set up for the Body of Water You're Fishing

This is where methodologies and philosophies collide. Your set up should be determinant of where you fishing and river conditions that day. Rivers blow out and heavy rains change runs dramatically so be sure to fish to conditions of the day. The heavier or the more absorbent lines are doesn't mean better chances of catching fish and neither does dry lines in fast water that starts to

resemble chocolate milk. As anglers we have to constantly change our cast and set up due to wind, wading depth, water obstructions or shoreline obstructions. Sometimes our cast doesn't line up because the perfect casting surroundings don't line up. We have to make decisions every time we're out and sometimes it just doesn't work, but always fish out your bad casts, and don't let it get into your head.

4. Slow Down

"Slow is smooth and smooth is fast," perfectly describes one of the biggest mistakes in casting, for nearly everyone. When competing at Spey-O-Rama, one thing that I have added into my internal dialogue is a reminder to breathe between each step. My dialogue sounds a little like this: "lift, breathe, rotate, breathe, lift, breathe, bottom hand engage, breathe etc..." This dramatically slows my cast down. Speed is one of the easiest ways to loose your cast. Your cast tends to get more punchy or aggressive and fast the more frustrated you get as you try to turn your line

over harder, or load your D-loop with more momentum. You can go much slower than you expect when casting; specifically as you begin to play with rod and line lengths (the longer the line, the longer the wait time). As a practice, try to slow down every step and see how slow you can actually cast. If your line is dropping or sticking too much, speed it up just a bit. There is a belief that the more power expelled, the greater the line velocity; however, if you are not exerting proper force at the right moment, your cast will break down.



5. Watch your Cast Form

Watching your cast form at each step is important work for learning to self diagnose or to prevent consistent mistakes. Take note of where your hands are, elbows are and even your

feet while casting. Often times, simple body mechanics will tell you what is going wrong. Watching your cast form can provide many answers to frustrations you are having.

6. Less Top Hand

Your cast should be less push and more pull. There are several analogies or practices I use to teach less top hand, one of them being, open your hand completely to just allow the palm of your hand to hold the rod which will restrain any muscle

memory from using too much top hand. Think of the rod as a plank or lever and in order to tip that lever, you must first pull from your bottom hand. Your top hand simply acts as a guide and as a fulcrum.



7. Fish the Dangle

Always fish out your cast. It's cliché, but the longer your fly is in the water the better your chances are of catching a fish. Allow your fly to swing through the entirety of the current and then when it's aligned perpendicularly to you give it a couple strips to see if anything followed it in.



Slow is smooth
and smooth is fast





Always *fish out your cast*



8. End High, Stop at the Tree Line

Watch that forward cast stops high and if you need a visual reminder, stop at the tree line. When creating your cast there is a lot of momentum and velocity that must travel through and that wants to travel through but if you continue your forward cast forward in a chopping formation, that momentum has no where to go other than down. One of the final few tactics that will make a massive impact on line velocity is stopping your cast hard and high. In single hand casting, we

hear the rule of 180 a lot, but it can and should be applied to spey casting as well. By using a double hand rod, we need to stop much higher to keep that rod tip path straight, which in turn will create tighter loops. Stopping high on your forward cast will force that momentum you've just created with your D-loop and energize it or loft it into an upwards trajectory. This will allow your D loop extra and necessary room to unroll into a forward cast. If you stop too low, your D loop will be

forced downwards resulting in lost momentum- the key to distance. Many novice anglers (and a lot of not so novice) will use their rod as an axe and chop down towards the water in order to stop. If the clock analogies work for you, and you imagine 12 O'clock is centre high; there is no power gained past 10-11 O'clock. Chopping your rod down, only eliminates line energy. Stopping high will also force you to use more of your bottom hand!





9. Start with a Shotgun Lift

Start your cast with a smooth vertical lift from your elbows such as you were lifting weights or a shotgun. Keeping your rod pointed downstream and your reel seat comfortable in front of you, start by slowly lifting your rod until your

forearms are at 90 degrees. A slow lift will allow you to build water tension with your line as it slowly lifts from the water and eliminate any slack from your line which will help control your line to make precise anchor placements.

10. Perfect Casting is not Always Fishing

At the end of the day if you are fishing, your cast doesn't have to be perfect to land a fish. It feels amazing when it all lines up, and you see your fly land exactly where you want it to start swinging, but sometimes conditions are not favourable to the perfect cast. In reality

sometimes all you need is a few feet of line in the water to catch a fish. If you're over exerting your casts beyond your ability or beyond the point of frustration, reel it in, reset and cast within in your ability or within the perimeters of the day's conditions and/or surroundings.



FLY TYING FEATURE

A Date with Steelhead on the

By Brian Smith

Dry Fly



Skater
Photo: Jessea Grice

Every September since we first met at the Smithers campsite 6 years ago, my good friend Kazumi Ogura and I have had a week-long date to fish Bulkley River steelhead that we hope will rise to the skating dry fly. The hope has become forlorn the past few seasons, but we still meet, we still skate dry flies with Spey rods for steelhead and we still hope to get a pull or two for our week's effort. And if we don't, this is fishing life, our cups remain half-full and we still have next year to dream about, perhaps. Kazumi and I are now both in our mid-seventies; every year we can to continue to wade the Northwest rivers is a blessing; we cherish the remaining time we have together.



Skating a dry fly across a river for big fish is nothing new; Atlantic salmon anglers have been doing it for a century or so. The passion slowly but surely crept into BC about 50 years ago when dedicated Maritime anglers moved west and brought their toys and sport with them. These days, with dwindling steelhead stocks and two governments who play politics and who refuse to take the appropriate actions to preserve some soon-to-be-extinct races of steelhead, many anglers are turning to the dry fly for steelhead because it is the epitome of the sport: unsurpassed angling for the world's finest gamefish.

Steelhead are not hard to catch on the dry fly. Even though they are not feeding when they enter their home rivers after several years of ocean living and travel, their natal instincts, curiosity and learned habits when back in their home river compels them to eat random food sources they grew up with in the nursery environment: stoneflies, grubs, beetles, caddis and mayflies. It's no coincidence that dry flies for steelhead mimic these insects!

What is hard for the angler is catching the timing of the run, having the right water conditions (temperatures, height, clarity), and simply being in the right place at the right time. To be

successful, you also must be able to adjust to changing conditions as they present themselves. Low, clear water = smaller flies, and look for fish in unusual places, like far banks in deep slots. High, tinged water = larger flies, fish spread out and behind structures to break higher flows. And it is true, in low light conditions of late summer and fall, dark patterns will out-fish bright ones, because a dark silhouette is more visible to

steelhead against the background of the sky, so use black and dark brown for most your patterns. Harder for us to see, but easier for the fish. As well, don't forget the ruffle hitch, which gives more action to your fly as it skates the surface, and also provides more visibility to the angler.

The best months for success for summer-run steelhead with dry flies in the Northwest is late August through September. ▶

Skater
Photo: Jessea Grice

Skater in mouth

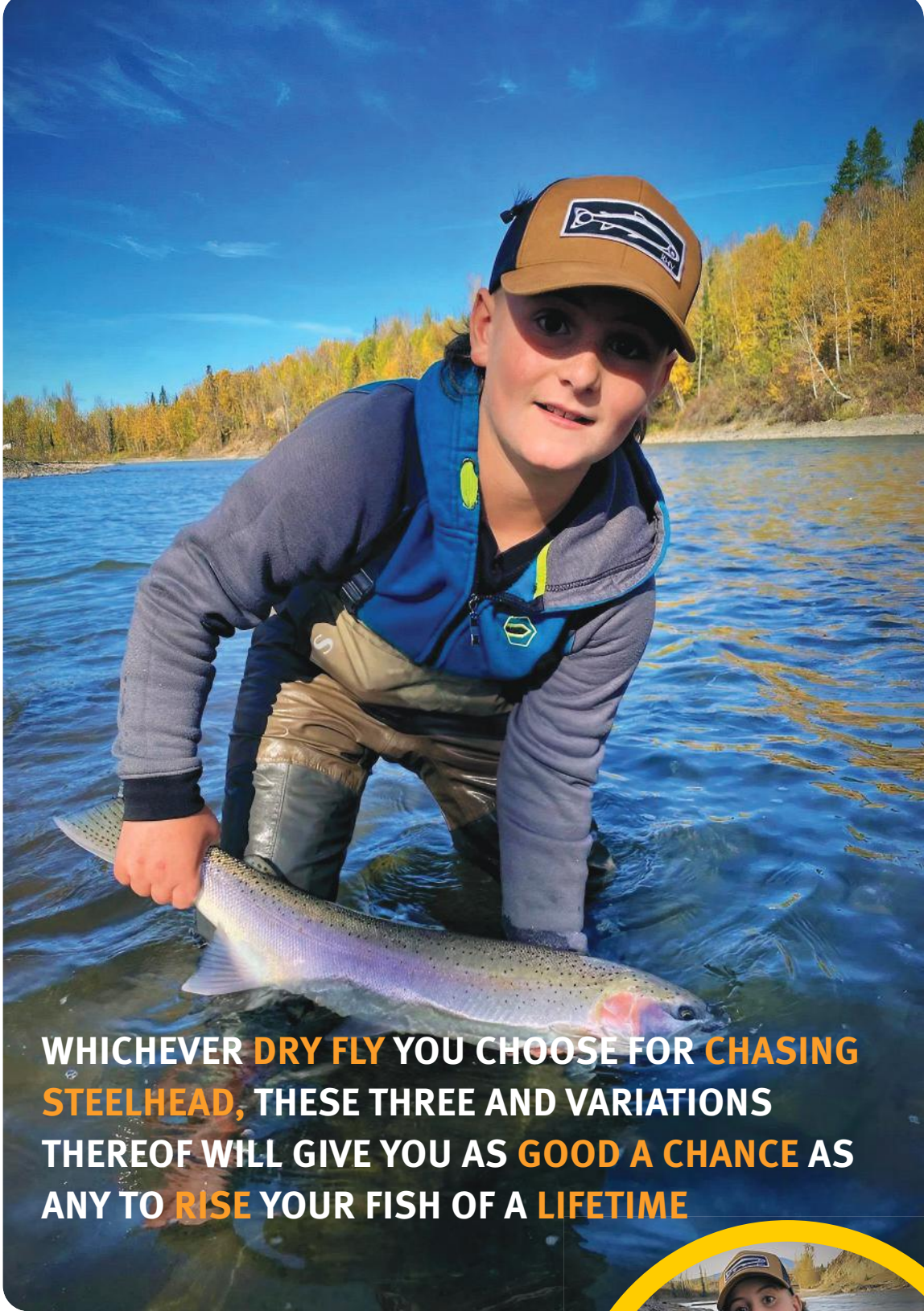


◀ **Jessea Grice 1st on dry fly 2002 Thompson River**

► Conditions are usually perfect for active fish: water temperatures are usually in the low to mid-teens, clarity is good, and fresh fish are arriving or passing through the runs daily, hopefully pausing to rest for a day or two in the angler's favourite haunts. The steelhead are in no hurry; they have a few months to reach their spawning grounds, several more to choose a mate and perfect gravel, and then abruptly conclude their appointed tasks of continuing their progeny. The strongest will return to the ocean to spawn again, and sometimes again, but most will not.

Dry flies commonly tied for steelhead success are representations of stoneflies, beetles and fall caddis. Elmer Smith of Prince William, New Brunswick designed and tied the Buck Bug for Atlantic salmon in the 1970's. He tied it with packed white deer hair and orange palmered hackle; there have been many variations since using most colours under the sun. For steelhead, the Buck Bug in black deer hair with a hot orange or chartreuse butt palmered with black hackle has proven itself by taking many fish.

The Steelhead Beetle first came into prominence in the Northwest; the pattern I use was designed and originally tied by Terrace resident and famous steelhead guru Rob Brown. Rob has progressed to stage 3 of a fisherman's life, and is committed to using dry flies for steelhead, and most everything else he fishes for. The beetle I tie is



WHICHEVER DRY FLY YOU CHOOSE FOR CHASING STEELHEAD, THESE THREE AND VARIATIONS THEREOF WILL GIVE YOU AS GOOD A CHANCE AS ANY TO RISE YOUR FISH OF A LIFETIME

Wyatt Grice — another on the dry fly

tied with some modifications of the Brown original.

The Steelhead Skater I tie is a knock-off from Mike Maxwell's Telkwa Stone. Mike and wife Denise operated a lodge and guiding business on the Bulkley River near

Telkwa for many years until Mike's death in 2004. I believe the lodge still operates under new management.

Wyatt Grice age 10 – 1st steelhead on the dry fly



Photo: Kasea Grice

FLY TYING FEATURE

Steelhead Beetle

By Brian Smith

Hook:	Up-eye salmon dry fly hook # 8-10
Thread:	UTC 70 or 140 burnt orange
Wing-case:	2 mm black foam
Butt:	dubbing, hot orange Hareline 04HD16 or seal's fur
Body:	dubbing, chocolate brown Hareline 04HD24 or seal's fur
Legs:	dark moose hairs, body length only



Step 1



1

Tying instructions:

Attach thread at hook-eye loop and wrap to hook bend. Cut a 1-cm width strip of foam, trim one end to a picket fence style, and then attach it at the hook bend.

Step 2



2

Make a dubbing loop for the butt section of hot orange and wind it over the thread butts of the wing-case, about a 5-mm section of dubbing for the butt. Continue with the rest of the body dubbing, which is 3:1 ratio chocolate brown. **Tip:** Make your beetles with a fat body section; I usually wrap the dubbings forward, back, and then forward again to achieve this "fatness." Fluff the dubbing with a Velcro tool.

Step 3



3

Clip a 1-cm width of dark moose hairs and attach to the top of the hook in front of the body with 3 firm but loose wraps of thread, and then tighten with 10-15 very firm wraps. Trim the moose hairs butts to extend 1-cm past the hook eye; gather the butts in your left hand and post them upward with 10-15 thread wraps directly in front of the moose leg's butt.

Step 4



4

Split and separate the moose hairs in half on each side of the hook shank, bind them with figure-8 wraps on each side of the hook so they protrude out and backwards from the body. (As an option, you can also tie the moose hairs to protrude forward. In this case, tie-off the foam wing-case behind the moose leg's butt.)

Step 5



5

Bring the wing-case over the body section, bind it with 10-15 firm wraps in front of the legs, and then tie-off. Trim the foam wing-case to same length as moose hairs butts. Finish the head with UV resin, and spray the fly with silicone for better floatation.

My Steelhead Flies

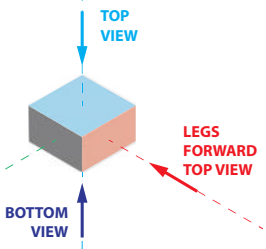
Top View



Other colours I like to use:

- 1) Seal fur in black with a chartreuse ice dubbing butt
- 2) Seal fur in fiery brown with a hot orange seal fur butt

Leg Forward Top View



Bottom View



A DARK SILHOUETTE IS MORE VISIBLE TO STEELHEAD AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE SKY, SO USE BLACK AND DARK BROWN FOR MOST YOUR PATTERNS. HARDER FOR US TO SEE, BUT EASIER FOR THE FISH

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Brian I. Smith, Author

Custom fly tying, rod building, shadow boxes



Tying the Buck Bug Black/Hot orange

By Brian Smith

Hook:	Up-eye salmon dry fly # 6-10
Thread:	UTC 70 or 140 black
Butt:	dubbing, hot orange seal fur
Hackle:	black, slightly longer than the hook gape
Body:	black deer hairs, cigar shaped, packed tightly



Step 1

1 Tying instructions:
Attach thread at hook bend. Do not attach at eye and wrap down to bend as it will prevent deer hair body from spinning properly. Form a dubbing ball of hot orange seal fur, and wrap at hook bend, wrapping back and forth up the shank 2-3 times to offer a good-sized butt.



2 Attach a black hackle, flat side forward (dry-fly style).

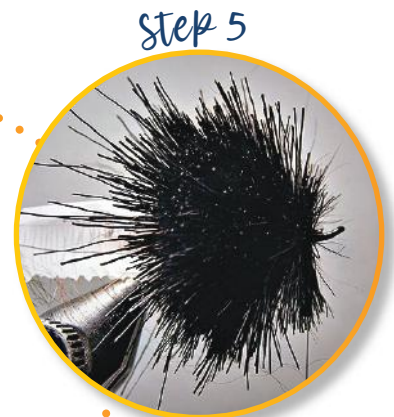


3 Attach a 2 cm length of scotch tape to hook over butt and hackle. This step aids when trimming the body, to not err and cut the hackle off.

4 Cut a 1 cm width of deer hair from the skin, turn it around and clip the tips off, leaving a 3 cm length of hairs. Grasp the hairs, attach at middle of portion to the hook shank with 3 firm wraps in front of butt section, then tighten very firmly and allow deer hair to spin. Continue to tighten the hair with thread wraps up the shank; make several wraps of thread in front of the pack. Continue up the shank with 1 cm sections, packing the hair tightly with your thumbnail or packer with each section. Photo shows 3 sections of hair; the size # 10 hook will need 5 sections to complete the body.



5 Completed hair sections packed to front of hook behind the eye. Tie-off the thread at the hook's eye.



7 Re-attach the thread. Give the packed hair a rub backwards to stand the hairs up a little, then palmer the hackle 4-5 turns to the front of the fly. Use UV resin for the head. Spray the fly with silicone for better floatation.



6 Trim the deer hair to a cigar shape. I like curved scissors for this step as the angle of trimming is correct. I like to begin by trimming the bottom of the fly flat so it floats upright, and then work my way around the hook front to back, trimming on a backward angle with my scissors. I then take the hook from the vise, put it in hand, and work back to front to trim to clean-up the rear section. Remove the tape.

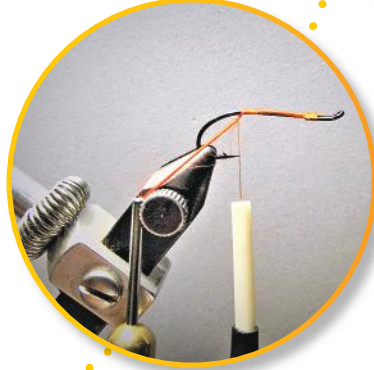
Steelhead Skater

By Brian Smith

Hook:	Up-eye salmon dry fly # 6-10
Thread:	UTC 70 or 140 burnt orange
Ribs:	Uni-floss burnt orange, 5-6 ribs
Tail:	elk, extension of body, length gap of hook only
Body:	elk hairs
Legs:	moose hairs, body length only
Wing:	elk hairs, body length only



Step 1



1 Tying instructions:

Attach thread at eye loop, and then the floss for the ribs. With thread, bind the floss down the body to the hook bend. Bring thread back to tie-in point.

Step 2



2

For the body and tail, clean and stack a 1 cm-width of elk hair, measure to length including gap of hook, attach with 3 loose but firm turns at the tie-in point, and then tighten with 8-10 very firm turns. The elk hairs will spin around the body. Keep a firm hold on the elk hairs, make 5-6 firm turns of thread down to the hook bend, then return thread back to the tie-in point with 5-6 very tight turns. Trim the elk hairs at the eye on a slant toward the eye of the hook. Trim any hairs that crept under the tail section.

Step 3



3

Bring the floss up to the tie-in point with 5-6 wraps over the places the thread was wrapped, and make a smooth transition of floss to the tie-in point at the head of the fly.

Step 4



4

For the legs, clean and stack a 1-cm pack of dark moose hair, measure to body length only, attach with 3 loose but firm turns at the tie-in point, and then tighten with 10-15 very tight turns. Lift and stack the moose hairs with 10-15 turns of thread in front of the pack. Trim them to extend 1-cm length over the hook's eye.

5

Split and separate the moose hairs in half on each side of the hook shank, bind them with figure-8 wraps on each side of the hook so they protrude out and backwards from the body. (As an option, you can also tie the legs to protrude forward to the hook's eye.)

Step 6



6

For the wing, clean and stack a 1-cm pack of elk hair, measure to body length only, attach with 3 loose but firm turns at the tie-in point, and then tighten with 10-15 very tight turns. Trim to extend even with the moose hair butts. Apply UV glue to wraps of legs, wing-case and head. Spray the fly with silicone for better flotation.

Step 5



Evolution of the "Rolled Muddler"

By Tom Murray

Paragraph taken from "The Gilly"
by Alf Davy (1985) Chapter XV111
"The Elusive Searun Cutthroat"
by Tom Murray page 136.

The "Rolled Muddler" is one of those flies that evolved because I was looking for a pattern that imitated our local saltwater beach stickleback. The fish is quite small, about one to one-and-a-half inches in length, has a silver-white belly, speckled sides and a greenish blue to brown back.

The natural mallard flank feather was chosen for a wing because, after trial and error, it was consistently the most successful. A coloured wing on the fly such as blue, green or brown just did not get as many hits. Because size was critical and I was retrieving just sub-surface, the best hook choice was the Mustad # 9671 size 12 streamer hook. It isn't too small to miss a strike and it isn't so big that it is difficult to remove from a fish.

Because the "cuts" look up at the fly as they do most food near the surface, I concentrated on getting a shape that fished well and didn't roll or bellow out as some streamers and bucktails do. To get ▶

Tom Murray with his
Rolled Muddler

Tom's 4 Answers

Orme Life

▶ the stiffness and outline I wanted, I folded or “rolled” the natural flank feather for the wing and tail. Silver mylar was the answer for the body. I added a reverse rib to hold it all together and I had the basic pattern. I wanted a flat-sided, bullet-shaped head and this was achieved by using spun hair and trimming it. By using red tying thread, I could get a little gill colour by trimming the hair to the hook shank on the bottom.

By leaving three or four longer hair strands along the body, I got the lateral line. It is not difficult to tie, but I like my flies sparse, and I often go back and reclip until I feel the fly looks right. It was an instant success for me and has been responsible for many of the best days I’ve had cutthroat fishing. The retrieve I use when fishing this fly is very important. When I saw those stickleback darting in the six to ten inch movements that are characteristic of this bait fish and started retrieving with a quick wrist action that I thought imitated the fish, I had my system.”

1. Having ONE PLACE in the world to fish, where would that be and when?

I’ve been fishing since I was four years old, when my mother tied me to a post on a bridge on Centre Island in Toronto, with a bamboo pole, a piece of string and a safety pin, fishing for goldfish in the canals while they went shopping! Growing up in Ontario, I had the opportunity to fish many of the lakes and rivers there.

We moved to West Vancouver, BC in 1969, and I joined the Totem Flyfishers. It was here that I learned about Cutthroat Trout, and my lifelong fascination with that fish began.

I’ve been fortunate enough to fish in the rivers of Hokkaido; the Frying Pan Lakes of Tasmania; the rivers and lakes of New Zealand, the UK and numerous places in Europe (often as a member of the Canadian or Commonwealth Flyfishing Team); and the northern rivers of Canada (from Labrador to the Yukon) — and yet my favorite place to fish is still the Y beach on Sechelt. It seems that was the favourite place of the Cutthroat as well, as they were the biggest and most plentiful there, and so the fishing was the most memorable. Really anywhere in BC is a spectacular place to fish.

2. Having ONE ROD to fish that place with, what would you choose?

If I was fishing the Y beach, it would be with a 9’ graphite #6 rod.

3. Having ONE REEL to put on that rod, which one would you choose, and what line?

My favourite reel is a Marrayat MR 8.5, and I would have it loaded with a weight-forward #6 floating line, with a 12’ leader.

4. Having ONE FLY to use, which one would it be?

My go-to fly, without question, is the Rolled Muddler, which I first tied and used in the spring of 1974. It took four sea-run cutthroat and 1 sea-run Dolly Varden, and since then it has consistently caught fish for me all over the world.



Rolled Muddler

Photo: Rory Glennie



WHEN I SAW THOSE **STICKLEBACK** DARTING IN THE SIX TO TEN INCH **MOVEMENTS** THAT ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS **BAIT FISH** AND STARTED RETRIEVING WITH A QUICK **WRIST ACTION** THAT I THOUGHT **IMITATED** THE FISH, I HAD **MY SYSTEM**

Photo: Kelly Henderson Photography
from: Laughline



DESTINATION

Fly-fishing the Beaches for Salmon

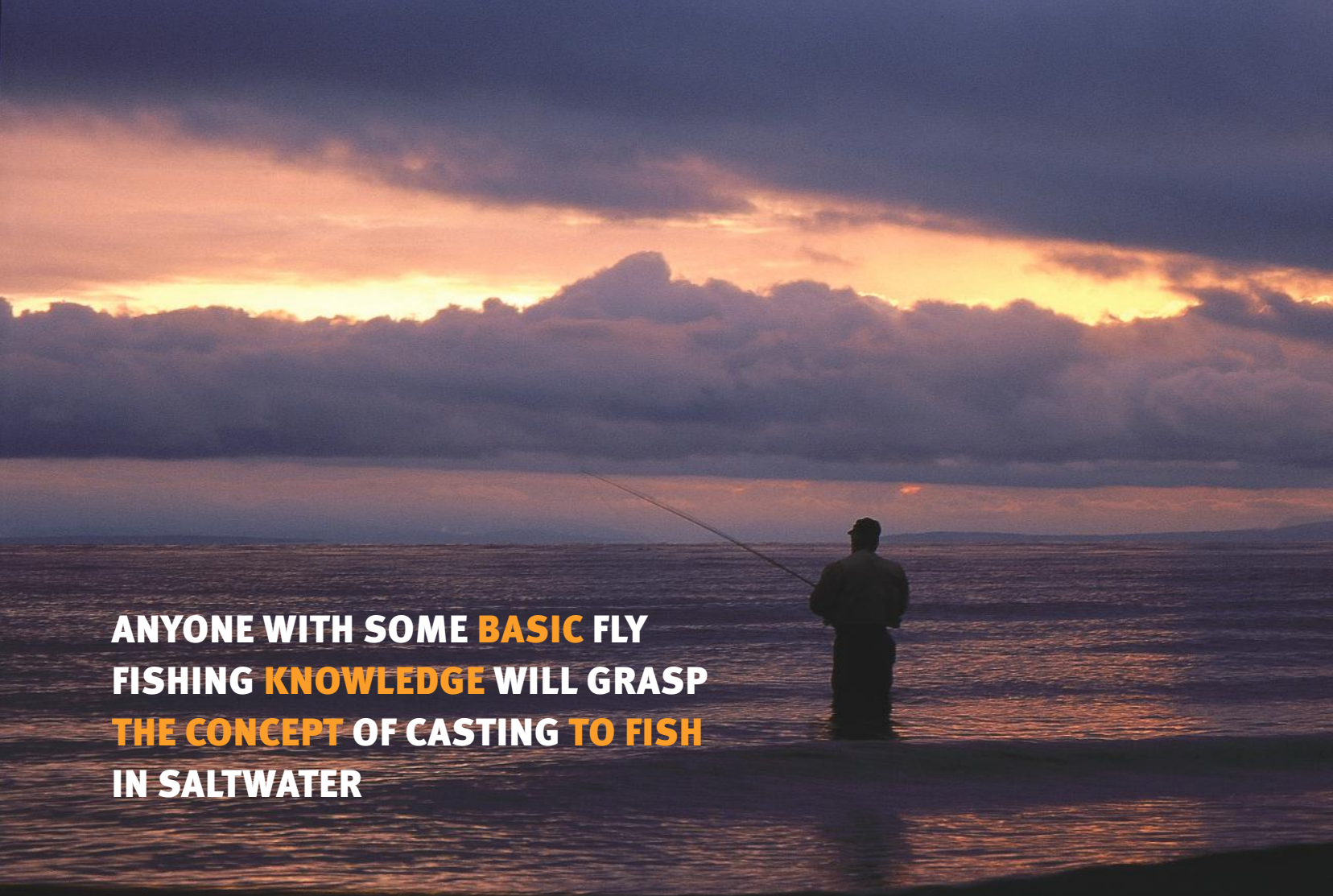
Text and Photos by: Rory E. Glennie



Map Courtesy of Fisheries & Oceans Canada

Fly fishers calling East-central Vancouver Island home are fortunate to have some great fly-fishing opportunities close at hand. Fly-fishing for Pacific salmon off the beach, especially for Coho and Pink salmon, has skyrocketed in popularity. That stretch of salt water coastline, say from Kuhushan Point in the north, to Parksville Bay in the south, about 86 kilometers as the crow flies, offers ready access to a number of beach fishing locales. Each in their own season, Pink salmon and Coho salmon are the main attraction.

Feeding into this region, larger rivers like the Oyster, Puntledge, Trent, Tsable, Big Qualicum, Little Qualicum and Englishman support good runs of salmon. As well, numerous small streams like Black Creek, Kitty Coleman Creek, Little River, Millard Creek, Roy Creek, Cook Creek and Nile Creek to name only a handful, sustain discrete runs of salmon. There is a mix of wild-bred and hatchery augmented fish emanating from several of those waters mentioned. They all add to the biomass; some add pinks, some Coho, some yield both. In total, that makes for a lot of great saltwater fly-fishing potential.



ANYONE WITH SOME **BASIC FLY FISHING KNOWLEDGE** WILL GRASP **THE CONCEPT OF CASTING TO FISH IN SALTWATER**

Accessing the fishery

Fortunately, Highway 19A roughly parallels Vancouver Island's eastern coastline and is often appropriately called the Oceanside route. Sometimes it comes so close to the waters edge that in places, winter storms toss debris onto it with a surging high tide. Any up-to-date road map of the Island, a digital cartography app on an electronic device, or clicking on Google earth™ via computer will show the highway/coastline interface in detail. Many beach access points are easily recognizable, while others may require some sleuthing and ground-truthing. Suffice to say, public beach access here is well established as a right; very little private property extends down past the high tide line. For ease of recognition, many established beach access points have been conveniently posted with official signage by the Regional District. Some beach



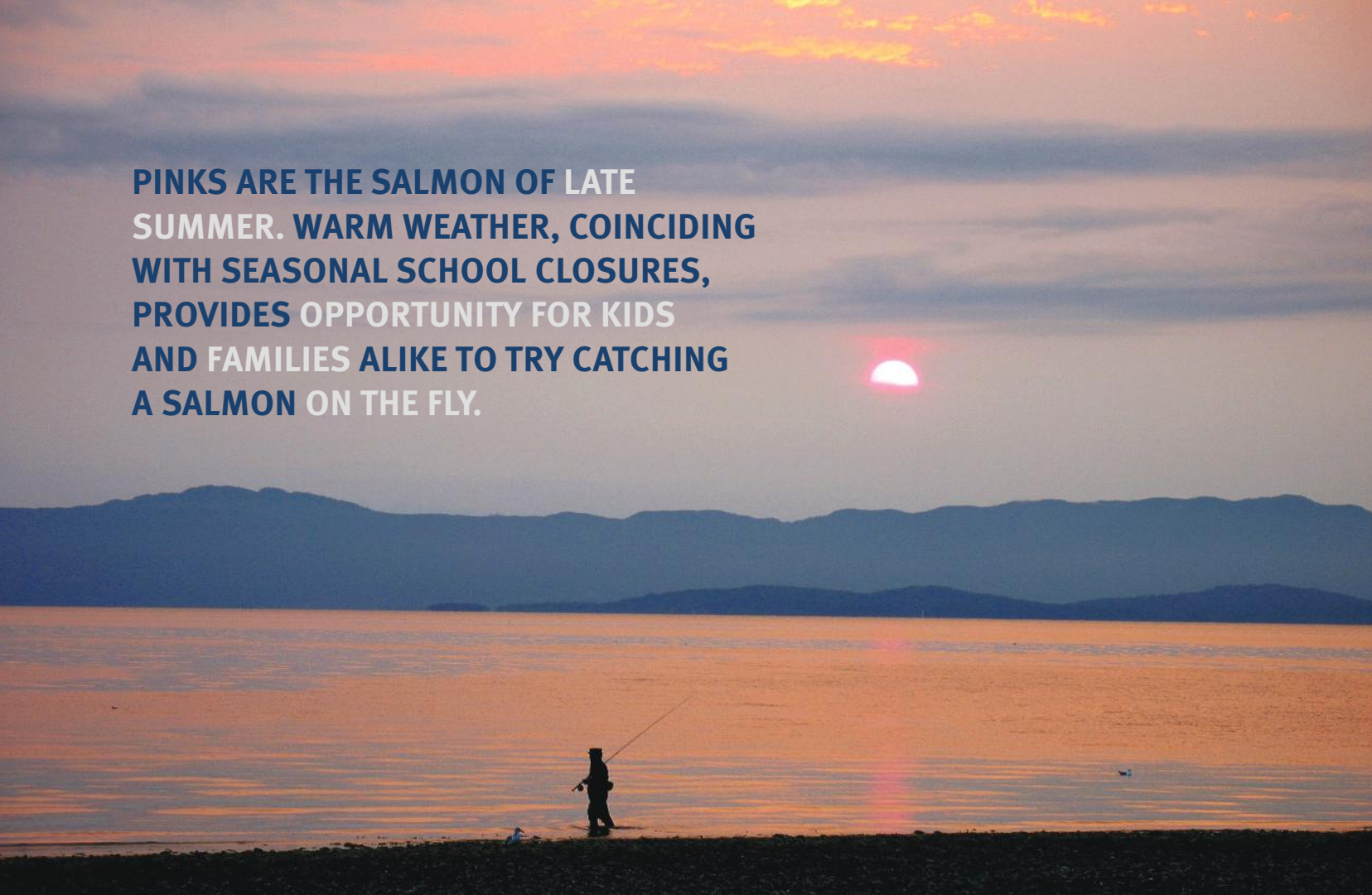
Pearl Mickey

Typical Beach Access Sign



access points even incorporate a wooden bench situated for ease of viewing the tidal tableau; most are standard, sturdy but plain, government issue models, while a few others are custom carved works of art.

For the most part, good fishing beaches in this region are of shallow gradient, with a mix of sand, gravel and rock for a bottom. This combination makes for relatively easy wading. Tidal flows over most beaches are gentle; so, no fear of getting swept away by a fast flowing tidal surge. Waves, on the other hand, can mount along any beach, due to the combination of prevailing wind/tide/seasonal weather conditions. Employing good common sense is the overriding factor in ensuring personal safety while fly-fishing off the beach.



**PINKS ARE THE SALMON OF LATE
SUMMER. WARM WEATHER, COINCIDING
WITH SEASONAL SCHOOL CLOSURES,
PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR KIDS
AND FAMILIES ALIKE TO TRY CATCHING
A SALMON ON THE FLY.**

Gearing up

Anyone with some basic fly fishing knowledge will grasp the concept of casting to fish in saltwater. Newcomers to the challenge will get a leg up by watching other fly fishers and asking questions of them. Most veteran beach rats are happy to share solid advice when it comes to tackle and flies; maybe not so much when asked where to fish, as they can be guarded about favourite fishing spots. Should you wish to get started in the sport, a basic fly rod, reel and line is all that's required, and needn't be too costly. A nine-foot, 6wt. rod will get you started. Any decent quality fly reel, with sufficient line capacity and plenty of backing will do. The fly line can be either a full floating, intermediate sinking type, or a combination floating running line with an intermediate sink-tip. These three types offer specific benefits and each has their own league of disciples. A fly shop employee can give a run down on the attributes of each type.

Leader/tippet combinations are simple, as these fish are not leader shy. Fluorocarbon leader material is great, as it offers best strength to diameter ratio and is all but invisible in the

**KEEP YOUR FLY
MOVING SLOWLY
BUT STEADILY
AS LONG AS
YOU SENSE THAT
IT REMAINS IN
FRONT OF FISH**

water. For the most part, simply a rods' length of straight fluoro will suffice. Using eight to ten pound breaking strain fluorocarbon leaders offers the best chance of attracting and holding a salmon. It goes without saying, a well-tied knot is your best friend. Most beach flies are on the small, sparse side as the water is fairly clear, so, too thick a leader will result in fewer fish striking the fly; play your fish with sensitivity and all will be well. If your tackle is not corrosion resistant, a good washing down with clear water at the end of the trip will allay the effects of saltwater damage.

A low-cost tidal water angling licence is required and can be obtained conveniently online from the Fisheries & Oceans Canada website. Through that website, angling regulations, localized closures and species specific quotas are found; look under Region One, Area 14.

A pair of good quality, compact binoculars comes in handy for scoping out distant stretches of beach while searching for tell-tale signs of fish, or fish catching activity. Wearing a pair of well-fitted chest waders will provide comfort

while wading deep into the briny. Topping the waders with a waterproof hooded jacket, to shed rain and to stop big waves from spilling into the waders when wading deeply, will keep you dry and comfy. Sundries like sunglasses, wide-brimmed hat, fly fishing vest or tackle pack can be useful. Oh yes, add a few well chosen fly patterns to round out your beach angler's necessities.

Some useful fly patterns

In general, fly pattern choice is determined by which species of salmon you are pursuing; with some occasional overlap. The traditional mantra "pink is for pinks" stands the test of time and is a good starting point. Some notable veteran beach fishers even tie-up convincing imitations of pink shrimp for Pink salmon. For whatever reason, flies with some blue-green characteristics make good change-up flies when pink ones fail to produce. A polar bear hair winged Pink 'n' Silver; a pink Candy fly; or a small Kelsey's Hope bucktail are good tried and true patterns



Pink 'n' Silver

to start off with.

For Coho, there may be some overlap with those previous flies, but, specific patterns have evolved for catching Coho. The aforementioned Candy fly in purple, the Olive Wizard fly — both originated by long time beach fisher Art Limber, are two notables. The polar bear hair winged Pearl Mickey and the Green & Silver are consistent Coho catchers. There are many other effective personal favourites amongst beach fishing regulars, like Neil's euphausiid — aka "California Neil". The customary hook size for these flies are size sixes and eights — super sharp and debarbed. Be sure to have a few of each of those patterns listed as they cover most circumstances.

Pink salmon

Pinks are the salmon of late summer. Warm weather, coinciding with seasonal school closures, provides opportunity for kids and families alike to try catching a salmon on the fly. Tackle required is simple, affordable and fairly easy to master. The Pink 'n' Silver is a top producer for Pink salmon. The Green & Silver is



my go-to change-up fly when the fish start ignoring the pink one.

After finding a good beach where the fish may currently be located, through asking at a fly fishing shop or looking for other fly fishers already gathered there, take a moment to actually spot the fish and plot their movements. Pinks will travel slowly in small groups near the surface, pushing a slight telltale bow wake. Other times all that shows are tips of tails poking through the surface like so many miniature sailboats all heading in the same direction. Being courteous to others already there, wade into a position where you can cast your fly to a place slightly ahead of the roving school. Let it sink a moment or two while the fish move closer to it. A straight line connection with your fly is paramount in detecting the gentle strike of a Pink salmon. Take the slack out of your line by pulling it in with your line hand while keeping the rod tip low, even have the tip actually in the water to keep the line from drooping. Keep your fly moving slowly but steadily as long as you sense that it remains in front of fish. If no hook-up is forthcoming, pick up the line and recast to the pod of salmon as long as they remain within reach.

Coho salmon

Usually it takes a good fall storm or two to bring these fish close to shore on their home stream migration. Some of the best fishing days are those just after a squall, with a bit of wind to set up a nice “Coho chop” on the surface. On occasion, an energetic fish may be seen gliding through the waves whilst highlighted by the sun.

A most consistent fly for catching Coho is the polar bear hair winged, topped with pearlescent Flashabou™, Pearl Mickey. As with Pink salmon flies, many other personal favourites exist amongst fellow beach-rats. Coho seem to be a bit more willing to chase after a fly than are pinks. Methods of finding and casting to both kinds of salmon are the same. The fly manipulation technique varies more with Coho than with pinks. A slow, steady hand-twist is good for a start. Accentuate that with an occasional quick, short strip-in of line to catch the fish’s attention. Often, a continual fast strip-in of line, rod tucked under arm hand over hand roly-poly style, to stimulate a chase response, will trigger a solid take. At other times, when Coho are milling about in tight groups and the fly is cast near



Art Limber's
Candy Flies

to the pod, simply the plip sound of the fly hitting the surface will trigger a reflexive strike. Don't get stuck in a presentation rut, be prepared to add variety to your retrieve.

The anomaly

Many times when Coho are off the beach, especially later in the season, fresh Chum salmon will steadily cruise amongst those fish. Sometimes they even outnumber the Coho. Fly fishers will only know if there are chums present when one of them jumps clear out of the water and reveals its faint greyish side stripes — not at all like those colourful splotches on chums in rivers. When off the saltwater beach, as opposed to when holding in freshwater, the main difference between Coho and Chum salmon is; Coho willingly bite the fly, while chums very rarely do. When chums are torpedoing through the Coho and have not revealed themselves for what they are, fly fishers often start casting frantically in ever diminishing hope of hooking-up. They wonder what's wrong; why are they not getting a bite? Sometimes the light dawns and they get the picture; fooled again!

After the hookup

Even a modest sized Pink salmon, or a small three-pound Coho “jack” can really put a bend in the rod and run-out a goodly length of fly line, sometimes well into the backing. Best advice; either the salmon should be pulling line out or you should be pulling it in, and getting it safely back on the reel as quickly as you can. Pretty much the same technique applies for full-size adult salmon, only the duration of the tussle will be significantly longer; much longer and more intense when hooked into a late season “Northern” Coho weighing in the teens of pounds. Remember, these salmon, whether they be pinks or Coho, are at their pinnacle of strength and endurance capability, so be prepared for a good contest.

To finish, some folks use a landing net, others prefer to tail a salmon, yet others will steer a fish into the shallows next to the shore. Whichever technique is used often depends on the fly fisher's ability; or whether a fish is being harvested; or if regulations do not allow its retention and it must be safely released; or is simply determined by the temperament of the individual fish — some salmon seem to never want to give up.

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OF FISH, OR
FISH CATCHING
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SELECTIVE FISHING

THAT SOUNDS POSITIVE, BUT HOW DOES IT AFFECT FLY FISHERS WHOSE PASSION IS ANADROMOUS STEELHEAD AND SALMON?

MICHAEL BARR ON SELECTIVE HARVEST:

A RAY OF HOPE FOR STEELHEAD CONSERVATION?



Michael Barr

Fly fishers understand perhaps better than any angling community the role of being selective in their tactics, ranging from rod type or weight, lines, wet or dry fly, and even specific flies that match what's on the menu that day. Selectivity hits another level as we focus our attention on presentation or lies of larger fish; in fact, we may even find ourselves catering to the selectivity of those fish (fish: I'll take a size #14 but nothing bigger!). But selectivity here has little consequence for fish conservation, as most fish are returned unharmed.

But what about selectivity in the world of fish harvest, and what affect this might have on fish conservation? **Selective harvest** is the term used for this concept by governments. It's a topic that has been discussed with little consequence for decades. A Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) policy first emerged in 2001 recognizing the following:

...“Because different species and stocks often mingle in the open ocean and river fisheries, fishers seeking stocks in greater abundance regularly catch less abundant or threatened fish stocks ... a strategy to harvest available abundances of large, healthy stocks of salmon of all species while ensuring conservation of smaller, threatened stocks. The answer, not just for salmon, but groundfish, invertebrates, seabirds, marine mammals, and all other species at risk of over-exploitation, is the widespread adoption of selective fishing techniques”.



As evidenced by DFO's 2023 Harvest Transformation policy they're promoting more emphasis and a more sophisticated approach to selective harvest beyond past conventions of timing, gear type and locations (<https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/campaign-campagne/pss-ssp/harvest-transformation-peche-eng.html>).

That sounds positive, but how does it affect fly fishers whose passion is anadromous steelhead and salmon? The problem is overlap of run timing between highly prized sockeye (or lesser prized) with steelhead and some chinook salmon. There are many fisheries intercepting co-migrating species; however, **non-selective gill nets operating under Food, Social and Ceremonial rights along major rivers unintentionally kill pre-spawning steelhead and salmon at the most vulnerable point in their life cycle.** In a 2022 letter from the Province of BC to DFO,

"we remain very concerned about the impact of (non-target) by-catch on Interior Fraser River steelhead populations which are of Extreme Conservation Concern ... It is critical that the declining abundance of northern steelhead is addressed immediately and by all management agencies to avoid a similarly disastrous scenario for Skeena steelhead as is now occurring for Interior Fraser"

On the photo: Selective fish trap



The BC Federation of Fly Fishers is actively promoting the **CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBLE SELECTIVE HARVEST** as a policy solution to what may be the most serious challenge to sustaining BC's Fraser and Skeena steelhead today.

As returns dwindle, the effect of non-selective fishing practices become noticeably outdated and impacts increasingly dire.

(Re)enter selective harvest.

“Harvest targeted species of salmon while reducing by-catch mortality and protecting threatened steelhead and salmon (through selective harvest)”

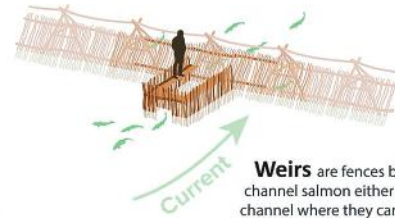
says Janvier Doire, of Skeena Fisheries Commission. Historic selective harvest practices of First Nations have returned in many forms: weirs, traps, and wheels, several of which are in operation today in BC. Doire continues:

“In the Pacific Northwest, First Nations used fish traps to harvest salmon for sustenance. Because of their great efficacy at catching migrating salmon, fish traps were banned (1868). However, this old technology may be an innovative solution to today’s fisheries management challenges. By promoting selective fishing and reducing by-catch mortality, fish traps may well be the future to help protect and restore BC’s wild salmon and steelhead populations, while promoting sustainable commercial, and Food, Social and Ceremonial salmon harvest initiatives”.

In an 2020 article *Indigenous Systems of Management for Culturally and Ecologically Resilient Pacific Salmon*, the authors suggest

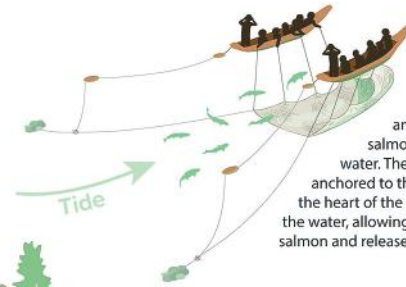
“Indigenous management of salmon, including selective fishing technologies, harvest practices, and governance grounded in multigenerational place-based knowledge ... showcase pathways for sustained productivity and resilience in contemporary salmon fisheries”

(<https://psf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Download-PDF631-1.pdf>).



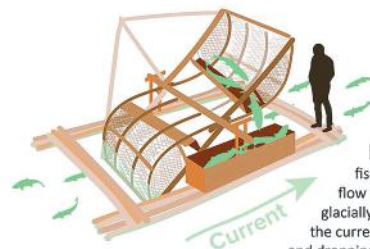
Weirs are fences built across rivers that channel salmon either into a trap, or narrow channel where they can be easily caught.

Fish traps built at or adjacent to the river mouth catch staging salmon as they wait to move into the river. Fish move in shore when the tide is high and are stranded behind stone or wooden trap walls when the tide subsides.



Reef nets capture migrating salmon in the ocean and are effective in locations where salmon migrate through shallower water. The upstream ends of net leads are anchored to the bottom, funneling salmon into the heart of the net. The net is then lifted out of the water, allowing fishers to selectively harvest salmon and release non-target species.

Dip nets are a ubiquitous, effective, and simple way of catching migrating salmon. Most effective at narrow canyons and cascades where fish are concentrated along the shore, dip netting sites are often passed down through families for generations.



Fish wheels are a stationary fishing technology powered by the flow of the river. They are often used in glacially turbid rivers. The wheel spins with the current, scooping fish out of the water and dropping them in a holding box unharmed.

The BC Federation of Fly Fishers is actively promoting the concept of responsible selective harvest as a policy solution to what may be the most serious challenge to sustaining BC’s Fraser and Skeena steelhead today. Learn more, encourage others, write government, and join in our advocacy movement to bring about this change!

Submitted by Michael Barr
Premier of BC:
Minister of Forests:
Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship:



Photo by Wild Fish Conservancy



Morning Myst
Photo by Peter Caverhill



Skeena Promise
Photo by Michael Barr



Wild Westslope
Photo by Vicki Green



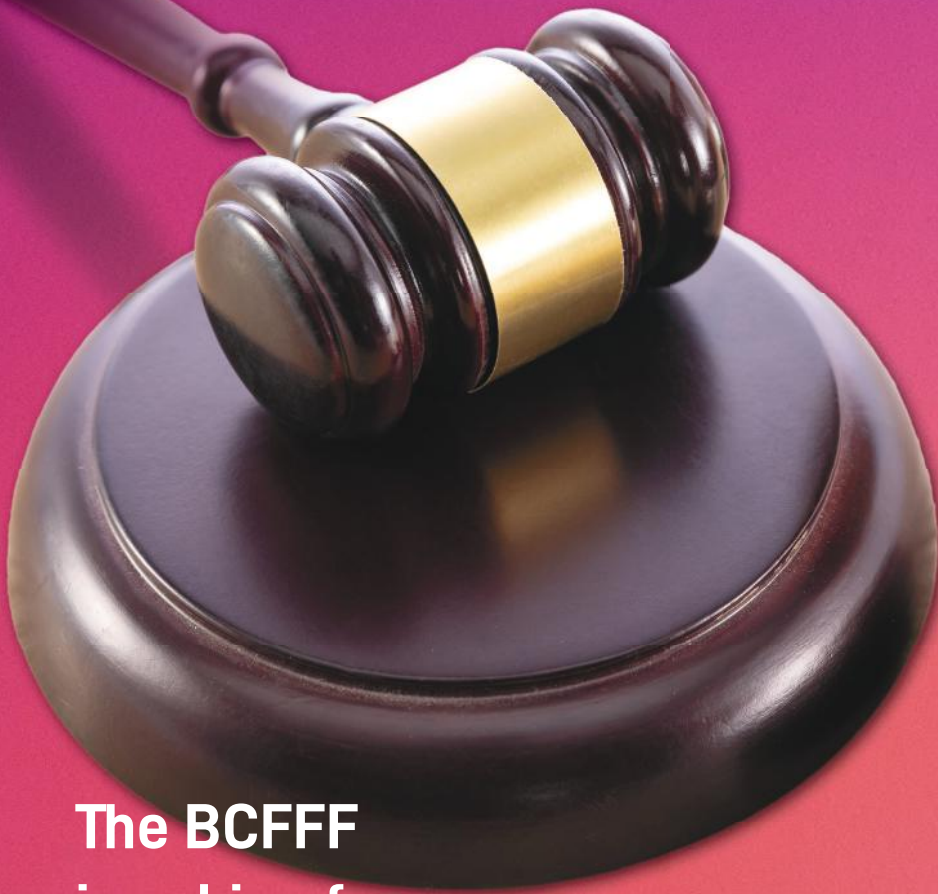
Chasing Rainbows
Photo by Michael Barr



Skeena Sunrise
Photo by Michael Barr



A River's wild wonder
Photo by Peter Caverhill



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