

FLY LINES

Official eJournal of the
BC Federation of Fly Fishers

ISSUE No1 | WINTER 2022/23

**DO YOU DREAM
ABOUT HUMPIES?
LEARN TO TIE
A GOOD ONE**

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**HAVE YOU EVER FISHED
GRAYLING IN BC?
SEE ARTICLE
BY DANIE ERASMUS**

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Join Us!

TODAY IN OUR MISSION

to conserve and protect BC's sport fisheries

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VOICE WILL PROTECT
AND CONSERVE
THE FUTURE OF FLY
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Campbell River Fly Fishers	Campbell River	Doug Phyll	250-923-6477	dphyll@shaw.ca
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Comox Valley Flyfishers www.cvflyfishers.ca	Courtenay	Dean Hodgson	250-339-3675	dmhodgson@shaw.ca
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Loons Fly Fishing Club www.loonsflyfishingclub.ca	Vancouver	Rick Bozwell	778-228-8545	rickboz@gmail.com
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Totem Fly Fishers www.totemflyfishers.ca	Vancouver	Anton Pasternak	604-789-7400	apasternak@shaw.ca

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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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EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Myles Armstead, President
mylesarmstead007@gmail.com
Brian Smith, 2nd Vice President
Vicki Green, Secretary
Jesse Blake, Treasurer/Past President
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DIRECTORS

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Jim Culp
David Mills
Jesse Grice
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FLYLINES EDITORIAL TEAM

Brian Smith, Editor
Myles Armstead, Publisher
Roman Riabov, Designer



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Cover Photo: Fly Casting instructor and Fly Tier Shawn Brown, member of the Comox Valley Fly Fishers demonstrates «Tight Loops»
Photo: Myles Armstead



Myles Armstead

President's Message

It is September as I write this; the Coho have yet to show up off the beaches and rivers, which are still very low and warm here on Vancouver Island. The air is cooler now and dawn brings with it a heavy dew, a sign that brings us closer to the Fall rains and a new season of fly fishing. I hope that this new Flylines Journal will provide information, enjoyment and perhaps inspiration as you plan your next angling adventure.

One of the questions that is asked of me periodically, as a director of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers is «who are we?» and thankfully this is easily answered by our mission statement which has remained unchanged for close to 50 years.

«The British Columbia 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 member's and the public's concern for the future of B.C.'s natural resources. Our organization believes that concern for the future of our province's environment is not just the exclusive domain of fly fishers or other recreation groups, but should be the concern of all citizens. Consequently, it is with this broader population in mind that we strive to protect and promote our natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations to respect and enjoy.»

In a recent meeting with Lisa Marie Barron, NDP Federal Fisheries critic, I read this mission statement to her and she stated how timely and contemporary it still read. I certainly feel the same way, and I am thankful for the foresight of the founders of the BCFFF. Perhaps, if you feel the same and are not currently a direct member of the BCFF, or a member of a member's club, I encourage you to reach out directly and join us – or better yet participate at the board/committee level.

Your board of directors have been hard at work representing the membership on the following: Sports Fishing Advisory Boards, Provincial Angling Advisory Team, Skeena Angling Advisory Team, Outdoor Rec Council, Fish, Wildlife and Habitat coalition etc... With many of these boards and teams we are actively involved in improving how they function, so that ultimately the fish will benefit.

In addition, we have been working closely with a number of local, national and international organizations and groups to see how best we can use our resources to help save wild steelhead. Regular meetings have been taking place with the province, and in particular on the Steelhead crisis. This is challenging work and is often discouraging, however progress is being made albeit slowly. Rather than take a contentious approach the BCFFF is actively working with governments, ENGO's and angling groups to find common ground and work together where we can help save wild steelhead.

The BCFFF also submitted our own feedback to the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan in an effort to represent our concerns about the ongoing steelhead crisis and the ongoing by catch issues created by non-selective fisheries.

The Gilly Fund and the Charlie Thomas funds are now being managed by one committee, which we hope will make the process of application and approval much easier for the clubs and organizations that wish to apply for funding.

Bill Nelson's trunk is back in BC and we are working with the Kamloops Museum on how this important artifact should be displayed. (I encourage you to write to the Museum to let them know how important Bill Nelson was to the development of our modern day still-water fisheries).

Finally, we now have an issue of Flylines for our members and others to read and enjoy. It belongs to all of our members, and I believe with your ongoing support and encouragement we now have the opportunity to provide an even stronger voice for BC's fly fishers within these pages. Enjoy!

Myles Armstead

President of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers

APRIL 28-30th 2023

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the BCFFF together at
Corbett Lake Lodge!



**The BC Federation
of Fly Fishers 43rd AGM
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- Special rates for BCFFF Members
- Guest Speakers TBA
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- Fun prizes



For Donations and general questions please contact BCFFF Jesse Blake or Brian Smith at
blake.drifter.jesse@gmail.com
flyfishingnut47@gmail.com

Or Contact Corbett Lake Lodge today and reserve your space today!
corbettlake@gmail.com



Club News/Reports

KALAMALKA

Kalamalka Fly Fishers Report

by Bob Tait

The Kalamalka Flyfishers Society was back preparing Vernon's Polson Park Pond for their annual Kids Fishing Weekend after a 2-year Covid delay. The club members flush the pond, and then subdivide the pond into 3 sections with mesh netting before Fresh Water Fisheries Summerland Hatchery delivers 900-1000 rainbow trout.

Kal Flyfishers have been providing the community's kids with this annual free fishing weekend since about 2001, generally happening the 1st weekend in May. The event is open to kids ages 4 to 14, and the club supplies loaner rods to those who don't have their own. In addition to helping first-time fishers (or anyone having problems catching a fish) the club members operate a bait station, fish cleaning station, a «photo booth» and a small concession serving hot dogs & refreshments.

The event attracted 792 kids, along with an additional 842 family members who attended the weekend event. In addition to the Kids program, this year we hosted a small group from Venture Training, an adult community living program.

Kal Flyfishers also participate in the Learn to Fish program, held in this area at the Kingfisher Interpretive Centre and Salmon Hatchery. Club members have helped each year since the programs conception not only at the fishing pond, but staffing the registration table & fish cleaning station. Members also man most of the stations the program sets up to introduce & educate children about «fishing», including fly tying, fly casting, and river (and water) safety. July of this year the program attracted about 110 children & family members to the Centre and gave them an introduction to fishing that we hope will keep them interested in the sport.



OSPREYS

Ospreys Report

by Peter Caverhill

The Osprey Flyfishers have continued having a general meeting and a methods session each month using Zoom during the Covid pandemic. We hope meet in person again soon, but have learned that Zoom allows us to have excellent speakers from remote sites. We continue to have monthly fish outs on local streams and outdoor fly casting sessions. In 2022 we have had well-attended

multi-day fish outs at Corbett Lake (in Spring and Fall), Tunkwa Lake, Knouff Lake, Xcalak (Mexico) and Cluxewe resort. Our Newsletter and new on-line Forum engage members. Recruitment of new members has been strong. We are especially proud of the success of the book we published for our 50th anniversary The Osprey Fly Box, available at many fly shops and **Amazon.ca**



THOMPSON RIVER

“Asylum of Loons” members gathering on the Thompson River



KAMLOOPS

Kamloops Fly Fishers Association

by Len Piggen

Kamloops Fly Fishers will have it's first fall meeting on September 20th at the Shanghai Mandarin Restaurant and our first fish-out is scheduled for Heffley Lake September 19th. We will have a Kokanee Fishing Method Session on September 27th and I believe Chrome Catchers will be attending. We have meetings and fish-outs scheduled into October.

Tight lines. Len Piggin, President KFFA
<https://www.chromecatchers.com/>

LOONS

Loons Flyfishing Club Goings-On

by Rick Boswell

It's been a relatively quiet season for The Loons. Spring/summer outings included trips to the Squamish, Thompson and Onion Lake. The fishing was good and the comradery excellent. With the Skagit being all but closed off It was felt it was better to give the system a chance to re-establish itself before we headed out that way. Hopefully we will get a late-season outing in as it is a very special fishery.

The fires, the floods and now more forest fires have hit our fisheries hard, but we know there are many, many BC friends, relatives and just people we don't know who have been deeply affected by these events. We can only hope that Mother Nature will somehow settle down and our world return to some kind of normalcy. Tight Lines.

Kamloops Fly Fishers Edith Lake Fish out



HAIG-BROWN FLY FISHING ASSOCIATION VICTORIA BC

Article by Margaret Greenway

Haig-Brown Fly fishing Association is now moving into year 46; we look back on our history with pride and into the future with enthusiasm. We have been celebrating our 45th anniversary all-year-long.

In keeping with our conservation mandate we have undertaken several projects. Our Cowichan River map is now updated, easier to read and includes the Cowichan Tribes lands. You will find them at your local fishing stores. Also, one of our Association's long-time members, Pat George, has graciously donated several fish images to us and we now have beautiful cards. These art cards,


available shortly, are blank note cards with envelopes, which will also make a wonderful art feature to shadow boxes. Both of these items are legacy projects, and the funds from their purchase will help finance future conservation initiatives and projects.

Please contact us through our website haigbrown.ca if your local clubs would like to order these items directly. Without the previous 45 years' accomplishments and the generosity of time and effort of our Conservation Committee, made up of their leader Pat George, Mike Edgell, and John Braybrook, these projects would not have been possible. The Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association membership is very grateful for this group's passion and dedication.

We also continue to promote the sport of fly fishing. Fly fishing promotes lifelong learning opportunities and friendships on the water, and in keeping with this, our Association has hosted fly-casting lessons this past year and looks forward to a return to fishing together. We hope we have the opportunity to meet you on the water. Fish on!



Please contact us haigbrown.ca



COWICHAN RIVER
From Lake Cowichan to the Estuary



I KNEW IT WAS COMING

Article by Art Lingren

A couple of weeks ago after I visited Gwen Kushner and picked up her last books she made, she sent me a note that she can't do any more books for me. I knew it was coming; age does affect our ability to do things. Gwen has a few years on me and I am pushing 80 and know full well that some things become more difficult to do.

Some time in the 1990s I attended the Oregon FFF confluence in Seaside and saw specially bound books at one of the display booths. I really liked them and when I visited Van Egan later, we talked about books, and he showed me some work his friend Gwen Kushner did for him. I think Van asked Gwen if she would do some work for me and she has been doing book binding work and making limited edition books for me since that time. In 1984 our club wanted to honour Rod Haig-Brown and I came up with the idea to do a book on Haig-Brown's Fly Patterns and we produced 17 bound copies. One if not the first pieces of work Gwen did for me was to make a clam shell book box

with a Haig-Brown Silver Brown fly dressed by me mounted in the cover.

Since that first work, she has made many slipcases, some with doors, for some books that I owned, and many limited editions of books I wrote.

Gwen lives in Campbell River, and I am in Vancouver. I often took my books over to her and then often I would make a return trip to pick them up and, on those trips, I would see and have lunch with fishing friends and of course see Gwen. I will miss the hugs and her cheerful greetings. But when I look at my Gwen Kushner filled book shelves and see all those Gwen Kushner-made books I will think fondly of her.



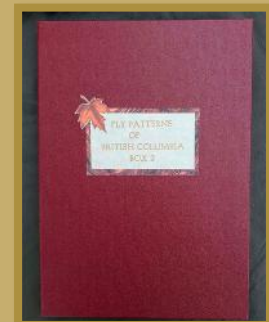
Some limited editions made by Gwen Kushner.



More of Gwen's work. The two Fly Patterns of Rodrick Haig-Brown clam shell boxes contain copy one of 100 limited edition and the other contains copy one of ten presentation copies.



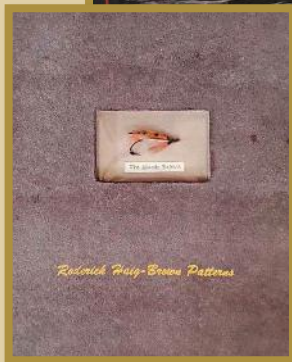
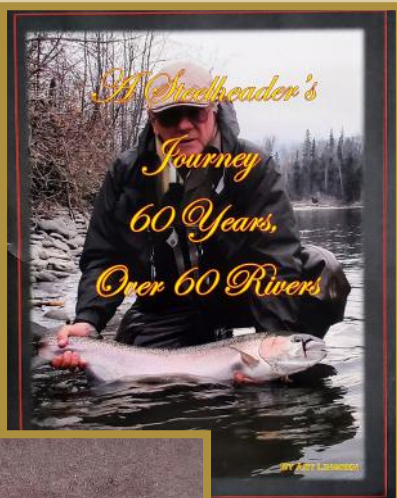
More of Gwen's work. The two Fly Patterns of Rodrick Haig-Brown clam shell boxes contain copy one of 100 limited edition and the other contains copy one of ten presentation copies.



More of Gwen's work. The two Fly Patterns of Rodrick Haig-Brown clam shell boxes contain copy one of 100 limited edition and the other contains copy one of ten presentation copies.



Neil Cameron holding up Gwen's last book and George Deagle is holding a limited-edition booklet of Van Egan's Catch and Release poem. Gwen had a few copies left that she found while cleaning out her shop and gave them to us. Also in the picture Ron Schiefke, Dan Holder, and me.



A Kushner-made clam shell box holding some of the flies from Fly Patterns of British Columbia, Three clam shell box were made by Gwen to house the flies in that book.

Fall Flylines 2015



Will Bush intro

by Brian Smith

I phoned Will this morning for a quick catch-up on his bio and permission to re-run the fall Flylines 2015 article for our upcoming issue of Flylines for a Back-cast feature. And where did I find Will? Wading the Bulkley, throwing a dry fly for steelhead!

Will has retired from guiding and is working construction to supplement his steelhead obsession which pulls him to the Skeena rivers every fall, where you will find him knee-deep in the flows, gleefully casting a small caddis with his Bruce & Walker double-handers.

Will continues to be an ambassador for British-made Bruce & Walker Fly Rods, which he believes are the world's finest fishing tools. And he still ties classic salmon flies with the very best of them!

Will Bush bio:

Will Bush was lucky enough to be raised on a small ranch on the banks of the Similkameen River in southern B.C.. His good fortune continued as he was able to hang out at Cathedral Lakes Lodge, where his mother worked as the secretary. It was there, at a very tender age, he found his passion for fly fishing. His next introduction to the sport – tying – would come from a family friend when Will was only eight years old. It was then that Will became addicted to both and spent as much time as he could tying and fishing all of the «famous» waters of British Columbia.

Twelve years ago, Will decided to step outside his comfort zone with tying and took a classic salmon fly tying course. That class ignited a passion for all things Spey and fancy feathers, leading to numerous trips to the Skeena region and the various rivers around Vancouver, British

Columbia. Most of Will's original and traditional steelhead flies, which cover all situations, are tied with the Skeena drainage in mind.

Will offers two kinds of flies: fishing flies and presentation flies. He strives to keep a traditional quality to his fishing flies; using top quality materials and tying them in such a way to make them as durable as possible. All his Spey flies are tied with a counter wrapped rib, this takes a little longer to tie, but results in stronger hackle. Very important as steelhead have very sharp teeth and can cut a hackle stem in one take. The counter wrap keeps the hackle from totally unraveling; extending the life of the fly.

Will is known for his beautiful full dressed patterns and upon request, will gladly tie any pattern using as many «traditional» materials as is possible.



With the taste of a good single malt and an old Pezon et Michel

This fly is artistically tied by Will Bush, who resides in BC's Okanagan. Will tied this traditional salmon flye and it is perfection from any angle!

«The Baker»

«The Baker» was originated by Captain J.H. Hale and it appears in his 1892 book entitled «How to Tie Salmon Flies».

Will has tied this fly using all original materials (very rare and expensive!). No substitute feathers have been used. The hook used is hand made by Ronn Lucas, Sr. from Oregon. It is a 6/0 Phillips Jones.



«The Judge»

With the taste of a good single malt and an old Pezon et Michel

«The Judge» was originated by Captain J.H. Hale and it appears in his 1892 book entitled «How to Tie Salmon Flies»

This fly is artistically tied by Will Bush, who resides in BC's Okanagan. Will tied this traditional salmon flye and it is perfection from any angle!

Will has tied this fly using all original materials (very rare and expensive!). No substitute feathers have been used. The hook is a 7/0 Partridge (old).



“Controversy erupts as DFO applies DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT REGIMES to Skeena Gillnetters”

Jim Culp intro

by Brian Smith

Our Federation’s long-time BCFF Director and Terrace resident Jim Culp, now in his mid-eighties and still chasing Copper River steelhead with a dry fly, has spent the largest part of his life and working career involved in fisheries culture and conservation throughout the Province of BC.

Jim has stood up, participated and advised on every committee and alliance ever formed for the protection and conservation of Skeena steelhead. His involvements are too many to list in this publication.

In this Flylines issue, we welcome Jim as our guest editorial feature with his take on what the issues are with Skeena steelhead, and his astute recommendations to overcome the conservation hurdles.

Letter to Editor Terrace

I am responding to the controversy surrounding the DFO North Coast Division Management decisions regarding the regulation of the gillnet and seine salmon net Commercial Fisheries in Area 4 for the 2022 salmon fishing season.

Commercial gillnet fishers and their UFAW Union-UNIFOR representative Dawn Webb have been very critical of the gillnet fishing restrictions requiring short nets (the length of a regular net) along with a short set meaning the net can only be in the water for 20 minutes with an allowance for another 20 minutes to put the net in the water and to retrieve it. These restrictions along with a weed line extending the depth of a net approximately 1 meter below the cork line to provide a greater chance for a steelhead to swim by the net in the upper water column.

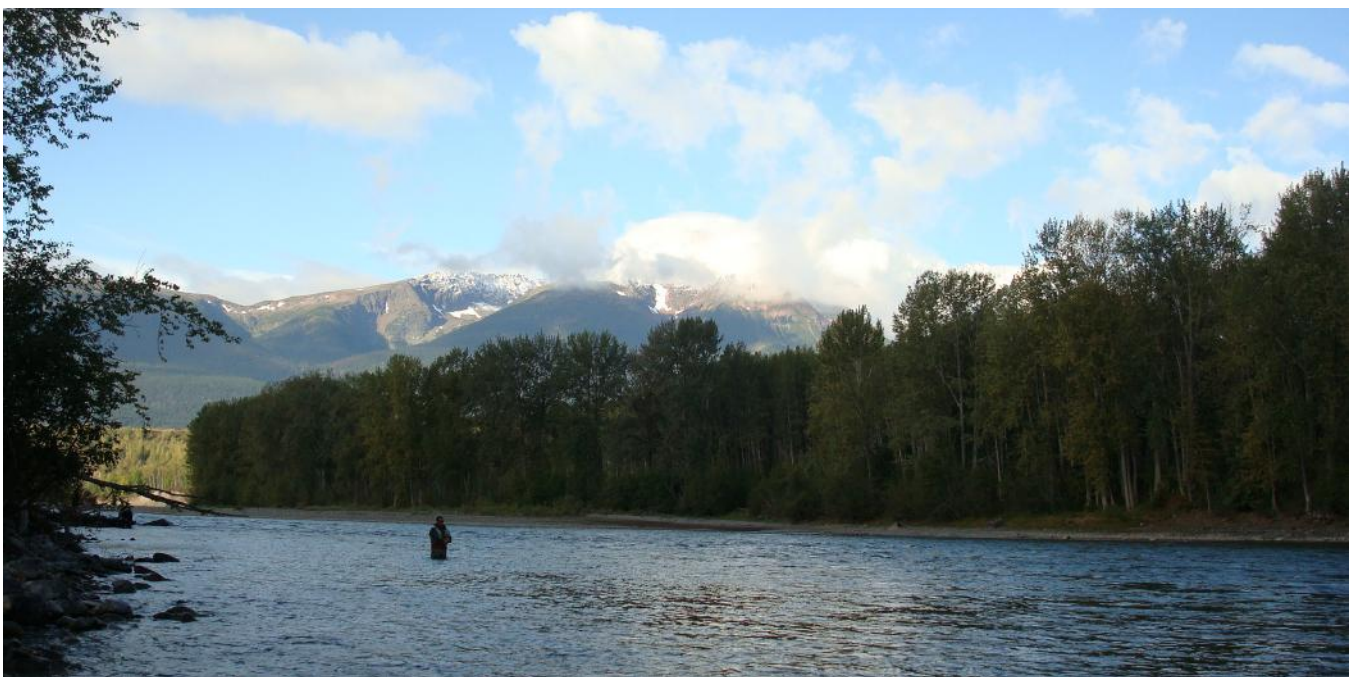
These restrictions in turn provided

the gillnet fishers a reasonable opportunity to harvest a fair percentage of the target sockeye and pink salmon while assuring fewer non-target species were caught as a by catch while those caught were released with fewer injuries, less trauma and mortalities.

According to Dawn Webb the decisions made by DFO were based on politics rather than science. Her reasoning is false! The decisions were made out of necessity based on conservation taking priority for threatened salmon species and steelhead.

She went on to say that the harvest rate for gillnetters is typically 40% rather than the 20% which they were stuck with this fishing season because of the net restrictions and reduced areas where they could fish. She said there was more than 4 million+ sockeye in the river system up to Aug. 7, the

«Sunrise on the Bulkey-Dale Freschi» photo credit to Brian Smith



last gill net opening for the season and for the 90 boat average fleet. During the total gill net openings the fleet was only able to harvest 490,720 sockeye which seems to me to be a very high number compared to the decadal average gill net catch which were much smaller.

During the pre-Fulton River and Pinkut Creek spawning channels being brought on line during the early 1970's up to 1100 gillnetters would have often divided 490,750 or fewer wild sockeye amongst that much larger fleet of boats.

The final gillnet catch of sockeye this year will almost exceed 500,000. Plus another

It is time that all concerned for the future of Skeena salmon and steelhead consider a new way of harvesting and processing salmon.

Jim Culp

85,422 sockeye that were harvested by the seiners along with an unknown number by the First Nation FSC fishery in Area 4 and throughout the Skeena River system including demonstration fisheries on the Skeena River and Babine Lake which will push the total harvest to almost 1 million sockeye over the 2022 season.

The Skeena River bonanza migration of sockeye this year is more than likely a once in my lifetime population return. No one, including the DFO's most experienced biologist's, were able to predict the size of this gigantic return of sockeye after a number of years of very low returns. Other than to say it was going to be a larger than normal.

Had the timing of this huge sockeye return taken place during 2021 it would have coincided with the estimated lowest return of 5,280 steelhead to the Skeena system since records have been kept, beginning in 1950. A previous Skeena steelhead scientific study determined that a minimum annual escapement of 20,000, steelhead is needed, to adequately seed the spawning and rearing habitats throughout the Skeena Watershed.

Had the scenario I have described taken place in 2021 it would have been a disaster. The reason being that a high percentage of those 5280 steelhead would have been caught by the gill net fleet using their regular longer nets and longer fishing times because the DFO and Provincial Fisheries would not have been able to react to such a dramatic conflict difference between the two specie migrations during the same year. Having said that, this year's return of steelhead while much larger than the 2021 migration still remains much lower than the three previous decadal averages and will likely end up being below the 20,000 steelhead minimum escapement thresh-hold and could end up being the third lowest of all time.

Ms Webb also said the gill net fleet can fish selectively with its longer nets and manage for mortality (I am unclear what that means). Un-fortunately gillnets cannot fish selectively as they are designed to catch and kill fish. With the majority of fish in a net gilled or tangled for too long a duration, often dying or suffering severe injury after being released from a net.

Not only steelhead are caught as a by catch in the sockeye gill net fishery, chum salmon which are on the Skeena endangered



list, low numbers of coho along with the small populations of sockeye which DFO has explained cannot stand more overfishing. The populations of sockeye needing help are native to the Nanika, Zymoetz, Kitwanga and various tributary streams flowing into Babine Lake. These species and races of salmon will continue decreasing in numbers during future large sockeye fisheries as long as they continue to be caught as a by catch.

I have been involved in the ongoing Skeena salmon management crisis since 1974 participating as the first recreational fishing representative for the BC Wildlife Federation and the Steelhead Society of BC on the disbanded Skeena River Salmon Management Board. The politics surrounding Skeena salmon and in fact across our province has had more to do with the lobbying power of the commercial fishing industry over many years than for any other reason but whose influence is now waning because of overall collapsing of salmon stocks caused by overfishing by all fisheries, unselective ways of fishing, climate change effecting the marine habitats, lack of committed annual DFO funding for salmon population assessments and alteration by flooding and human encroachment into freshwater salmonid habitats.

It is time that all concerned for the future of Skeena salmon and steelhead consider a new way of harvesting and processing salmon. The ways of the past and current fishing practices are carried out will not work as it pits the various stakeholders and First Nations against each other and will continue to do so unless major change takes place.

Existing gill net licenses need to be bought back, one at a time, so that true selective harvesting can be established throughout the Lower Skeena River using large fish wheels or alternative proven selective harvest technology with shares offered to current gillnetters willing to participate in the revenue from a selective harvesting platform or tangle tooth nets if they can be proven through scientific analysis and studies to be a selective technology.

Whatever selective harvesting technology is decided upon must be guided by continuing incorporation of strict DNA and other salmon species and steelhead stock ID information to guide fishing openings and to minimize timing conflicts between various races and stocks of steelhead and salmon.



John Hagen Suskwa '22

In addition to the above First Nations should only harvest sockeye or other target species where and when selective harvesting can be used or in rivers of origin where no by catch issues will occur.

In lieu of the increasing conflict and friction over how salmon and steelhead are managed in the Skeena Watershed a major review is long over do that must be initiated by the DFO in concert with Provincial Fisheries, First Nations and with public input. The focus must be on the harvesting conundrum and how large the annual sockeye production from the two Babine Lake spawning channels should be in the overall mix of sockeye salmon migrating back to the Skeena River? It is obvious population returns of anything more than 2 million Babine sockeye cannot be harvested without causing huge by catch problems, conservation concerns, more animosity and political repercussions.

I am suggesting a plan that envisions Prince Rupert as the canning and processing hub for lower river selective harvesting operations, while upriver harvesting would either use the Prince Rupert facilities or find a way of processing closer to their selective harvesting operations. None of the harvested salmon should be processed

in offshore facilities which currently have resulted in the loss of local jobs and control over quality and best practices that should be returned to our Province and into the hands of the responsible Provincial and or Federal institutions.

Last but not least seine fisheries should not replace gill nets because their ability to selectively fish is questionable during large bagged numbers of fish being sorted alongside a seine boat or on the deck of the boat where is impossible to carry out a humane sorting of fish. If they fish in areas where non-target species are rarely caught the issues are not as serious.

*Respectfully,
Jim Culp Terrace and a member of
the BC Federation Fly Fishers
August 19, 2022*

Tying a good

By Brian Smith

"Humpy"

"Humpies" are a fly fisher's delight because they float high, represent everything but nothing in particular, and by varying your sizes, will catch any fish that swims. Its origins began in Great Britain in the early 19th century as the "Tom Thumb", which was redesigned by Jack Horner of San Francisco in the 1940's and called the "Horner Deer Hair", using nothing but deer hair to float the fly. When the Horner design was introduced to the Yellowstone area mid-century, it went through more design theories by adding different colours and blends of body materials including moose hair, floss and chenille, and became known as the "Humpy". Well-tied humpies use moose hair for the tail, a high-floating, long, coarse deer hair for the wing-case, and medium-fine short deer hair for the wing. The original

Yellowstone body called for bright yellow flat floss but, depending on the dominant hatch present, can be modified with a variety of colours including red, black, orange, olive and rust. The dry-fly hackle is commonly brown, but I use grizzly and dun as well. Hook sizes can be varied also, from sizes 6 and 8 for steelhead, down to size 18 for finicky trout feeding on ants. My personal favourite for the rivers I fish is a dry-fly 2x fine hook like Mustad R43 in sizes # 14 and 16. The humpy's wings can be tied split-wing, posted or my personal favourite, fan-wing style.



The "Humpy"

Thread: UTC 70 hopper yellow
 Hook: 2 x fine dry fly # 8-18
 Tail: moose hairs, 10-12
 Wing: deer hairs, medium & short
 Wing-case: deer hairs, coarse & long
 Body: 2-strand yellow flat floss
 Hackle: brown saddle

Steps to tie a "Humpy"



1
Tail: Clean and stack 10-12 moose hairs. Length should be slightly longer than the hook gape. Tie to hook shank 3 eye-lengths behind eye and wrap to hook bend. Make a turn under the hairs at hook bend to force hairs upward.



2
Wing: Clean and stack a 10mm width of short, medium deer hairs. Length of wing should be body length (not shank length). Tie in at butts with tips forward at 3 eye-lengths behind eye. Trim butts behind wing, move your thread forward in front of the wing and block the wing upright with 10-15 wraps of thread. Tip: I like to finish most of the head wraps at this point.



3
Wing-case: Clean and stack a 10mm width of long, coarse deer hairs. Tip: Length should be longer than the tail hairs to facilitate bringing the wing-case forward. Tie in at junction in front of tail hairs.



4
Body: Cut a 10cm length of double strand floss. Tie in behind wing and wrap down the shank and back to tie-in point, forming a smooth body section.



5
Wing-case: Bring the wing-case over the body and tie off behind the wing.



6
Hackle: Tie hackle stem in front of wing, concave side forward, take a half-turn and two full turns behind wing, then 3-4 turns in front of wing to finish the fly. Whip-finish and cement head.



7
Water-shedding application: I like to spray my dry flies with silicone or boot water-proofing. I have a sheet of foam to stick the flies into for this purpose.

Sail Fin of the North

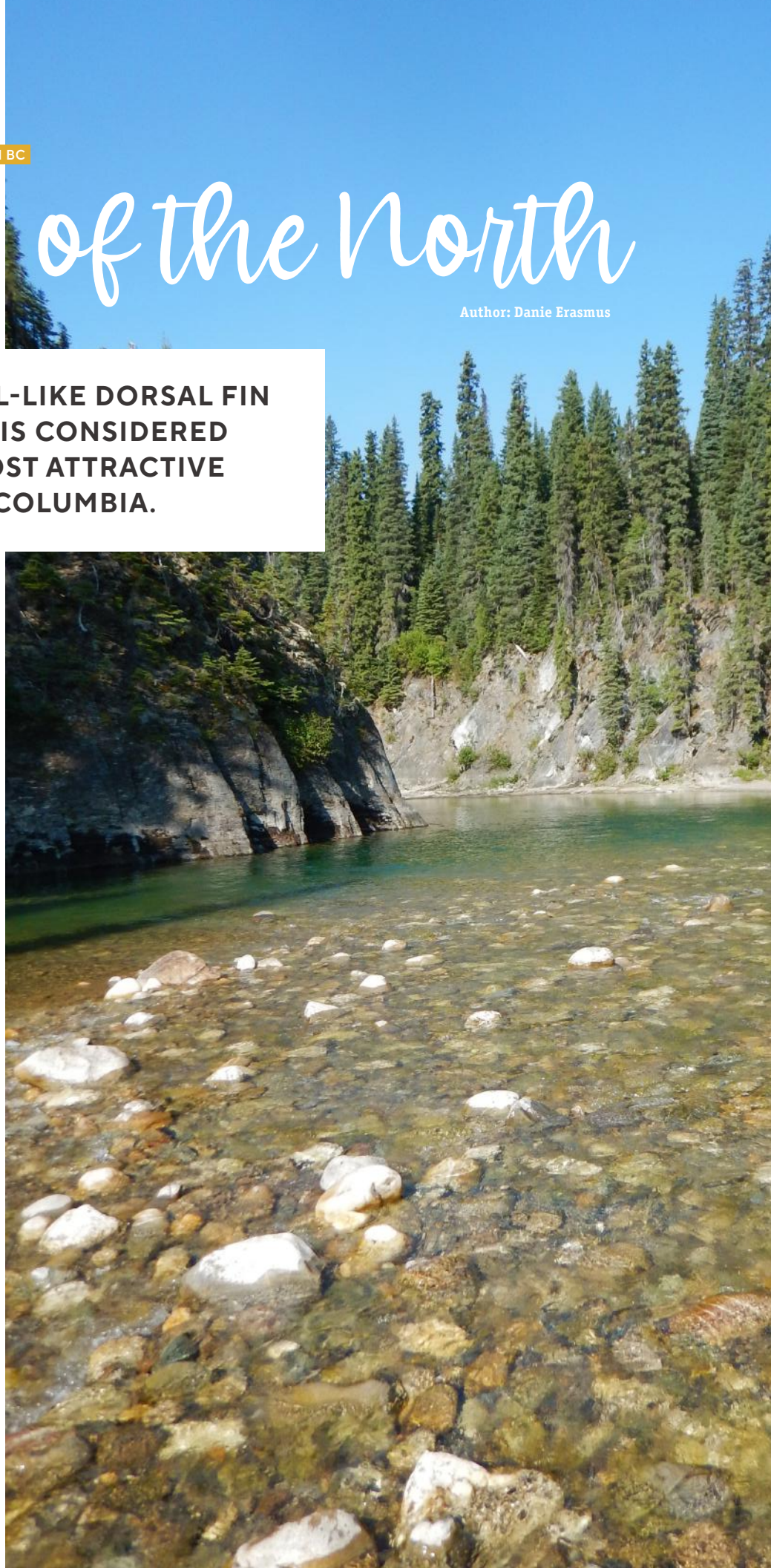
Author: Danie Erasmus

WITH ITS ELEGANT, SAIL-LIKE DORSAL FIN THE ARCTIC GRAYLING IS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE THE MOST ATTRACTIVE GAME FISH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Yet many anglers have yet to seek out the species – not because they are a difficult fish to catch, but because of the remote locations, rough roads, and long travelling times required to reach them. But, as those who conquer the challenges raised by grayling fishing will understand, there is a lot more to this spectacular salmonid than just good looks.

Distribution of Arctic grayling

There are as many as 12 grayling species worldwide inhabiting rivers and streams in the northern parts of Europe, Asia and North America. Here in North America there is only one species – the Arctic grayling – but it can be found in Alaska, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and all the way from British Columbia to Manitoba, with a small, isolated population in northwestern Montana. In BC the fish is found in the more remote northern half of the province. They are primarily in the streams, rivers and lakes of the Peace, Liard and Yukon River – all drainages of the Arctic watershed. But a few Pacific Ocean tributaries, such as the Stikine, Taku and Alsek Rivers in northwestern BC, are also home to Arctic grayling.





THE BEST
TIME TO FISH
FOR ARCTIC
GRAYLING IS
DURING THE
SUMMER,
FROM LATE
JULY TO EARLY
SEPTEMBER

Anzac River photo Danie Erasmus

Fishing North Central BC

The furthest south that Arctic grayling can be found in BC is just north of Prince George in the large, milky-coloured Parsnip River, which flows north out of Arctic Lake into Williston Lake. Nearly all of the Parsnip's tributaries start in the Misinchinka Ranges and the most well-known for good Arctic grayling fishing are the Anzac, Misinchinka and the Table Rivers. To reach the Anzac and Table Rivers take the Chuchinka Red Rocky Forest Service Road east off of Highway 97 about 90 km north of Prince George. This rough road is a scenic drive between the Tacheeda Lakes and eventually crosses the Parsnip River. Once on the other side of the Parsnip the road forks to the left for the Anzac River and to the right for the Table River. The Anzac is easily accessed at two bridges, but to get to the Table requires more determination. That road has been deactivated, so you need to be prepared for a hike or mountain bike to access the upper reaches of the river. On the plus side this means less fishing pressure. The Misinchinka River can be accessed using forest service roads off of Highway 97 between the Highway 39 junction to Mackenzie and the Pine Pass further north.

As you travel through the Pine Pass, you also meet up with the Pine River, another well-known Arctic grayling fishery. Highway 97 parallels the Pine River as it flows east towards the town of Chetwynd and there are numerous access points for fishing along the way. Due to this relatively easy access, the river receives more angling pressure than the Parsnip and its tributaries. Fishing the Pine is still good but the Arctic grayling tend to be smaller than those of the Parsnip. The Pine has also only recently recovered from an oil spill in August 2000 that had a devastating effect on the fish populations and the town of Chetwynd further downstream.

After passing Chetwynd and its famous chainsaw carvings, take Highway 29 south towards Tumbler

Ridge to fish the Burnt and Sukunka Rivers. While the Parsnip drains the western slope of the Misinchinka Ranges, the Burnt and Sukunka Rivers drain the eastern slope. Take the Sukunka Forest Service Road off of Highway 29 and explore the many pools and runs for lurking Arctic grayling.

Biology, habitat and feeding of Arctic grayling

Adult Arctic grayling migrate from lakes and larger unsilted rivers into smaller tributaries to spawn from May until June. The males are easily distinguished from the females by the bright orange bands on their pelvic fins. The sail-like dorsal fin is also much larger in males, with the fin rays extending almost to the adipose fin. Spawning Arctic grayling do not build a redd but, like mountain whitefish, the female scatters between 3,000 to 14,000 eggs over coarse gravel to be fertilized by the male. After about two to four weeks the eggs hatch. The emergent fry grow rapidly during the first two years, reach sexual maturity by five years and can live up to nine years.

Although Arctic grayling is primarily a riverine fish it has three life histories. Some fish will spend their entire lives in rivers and streams, while others will migrate between lakes and rivers and some will stay their entire lives in lakes. Fly-fishers mainly target the riverine Arctic grayling as they are the most widely available, but the biggest challenge with this fish is locating them. Arctic grayling have complex migrations and move long distances between summer feeding, over-winter and spawning sites. A run filled with Arctic grayling in July may be completely devoid of fish by October. During winter they spend time in side channels, backwaters of larger rivers, and spring-fed areas. As summer approaches they migrate to the middle and upper reaches of rivers with cold, clean water.

Arctic grayling are primarily



insectivores, feeding mostly on aquatic insects like mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies. On occasion they will also feed on eggs and small baitfish. The biggest shift in their diet occurs between winter and summer, as food availability changes. During winter a large part of their diet is bottom dwelling or benthic insect larvae. In summer their diet gradually changes to insects drifting higher up in the water column. This can lead to fish feeding on adult mayflies, caddisflies, stoneflies and various terrestrials such as wasps, bees, grasshoppers and ants.

Feeding in summer occurs in pools and runs just below steep, fast-moving riffle water. In this water Arctic grayling mingle with mountain whitefish, with the grayling hold higher up in the water column, closer to the surface, and the whitefish closer to



Parsnip Video:
<https://www.gofishbc.com/Blog/Conservation/Arctic-Grayling-in-the-Parsnip-Watershed-%E2%80%93-The-Sto.aspx>

Grayling-Anzac River
Photo: Danie Erasmus

the bottom. Naturally, the Arctic grayling feed more on the drifting insects and the mountain whitefish more on benthic organisms. Larger, older Arctic grayling can dominate smaller fish and establish themselves in the best position through a series of intimidation rituals. The best position, called the prime lie, provides easy access to food with well-oxygenated water, and provides protection from predators and current. For Arctic grayling the prime lie is usually located in deep depressions near the centre of the run.

Equipment, Tactics and Flies

The average size of Arctic grayling is in the 11 to 13-inch range. A typical setup for these fish is a four-weight fly rod that is nine feet in length. This, paired with a weight-forward floating fly line, will cover nearly any situation, but a sink-



A GOOD STRATEGY IS TO START WITH LARGER DRY FLIES TIED WITH FOAM OR DEER HAIR.

tip fly line can also be valuable as it can provide you with options when the fishing is tough.

Arctic grayling are not leader-shy, so monofilament leaders tapering down to 4X or six-pound break strength are a good all-round choice. When fishing with dry flies add two to three feet of 4X tippet to your nine-foot leader. This will allow for an adequate drag-free drift. When switching to nymphs or wet flies the same leader setup can be used, but you may need to add a bit more tippet to ensure that the fly reaches the required depth.

Arctic grayling have garnered a reputation for being relatively easy to catch, but before setting out make sure you have realistic expectations. Many first-time grayling anglers have visions of ten fish jumping at

their dry fly on the first cast, and that they'll be reeling in catch all day long. Sometimes you may have to do a bit of exploring to find the good fishing, but that is part of the fun. Other times you may have to change flies a few times to have success.

The best time to fish for Arctic grayling is during the summer, from late July to early September. During this time the species does its reputation justice, readily rising to dry flies even if it seems like no insects are hatching or flying around. A good strategy is to start with larger dry flies tied with foam or deer hair. Flies like Stimulators, Elk Hair Caddis, and Chernoble Ants in sizes eight to ten come to mind. If you have no success with bigger flies, switch to smaller dry flies such as an Adams or Pale Morning Dun in sizes 14 to 16. If dry-fly fishing fails altogether, turn to either swinging soft hackle wet flies like a Partridge and Orange or small, weighted nymph imitations. The Pheasant Tail Nymph, the Gold Ribbed Hare Ear, the Prince Nymph and the Copper John in sizes 12 to 16 are all good choices. Obviously if there are insects hatching, focus on «matching the hatch» as you will the best results.

Arctic grayling often share waters with bull trout who display predatory behaviour towards grayling. If these two species occupy the same pool a bull trout may even chase a grayling that you have on the hook. Fishing

a prime grayling pool or run can also be unsuccessful if a big bull trout is close by. Target the bull trout first with large streamers and a heavier weight fly rod. After the bull trout is caught and released the Arctic grayling will be more likely to begin to rise to dry flies. This strategy has worked countless times, and sometimes while trying to fish for the bull trout you will catch the odd Arctic grayling. Grayling that take streamers intended for bull trout are often large males of 16 inches or more, generally considered to be large fish.

With a little know-how and experience Arctic grayling can live up to their reputation as being easy to catch on a dry fly. However, being easy to catch is also their biggest downfall and makes Arctic grayling vulnerable to over fishing. The BC populations mentioned here are doing well, but they still only make up a small percentage of what they used to be. Changes in the environment, such as the creation of Williston Reservoir, eliminated much of the Arctic grayling's original habitat. Also oil spills, easy fishing access and increased fishing pressure have made life difficult for the species. Hopefully the current provincial catch and release regulations will ensure that the southern range of Arctic grayling continue to be a viable recreational fishery.



▲ «Scenery»
Dragon Lake Quesnel at first light
Photo Brian Smith

▼ «Good Fish»
Stellako River rainbow
Photo Brian Smith





"Keep them Wet" photos
Dragon Lake rainbow
Photo Brian Smith

Esteemed Steelhead Biologist

Bob Hooton's tragic tale of the collapse of the Thompson River steelhead run

“A heartbreaking
the destruction of
greatest steelhead

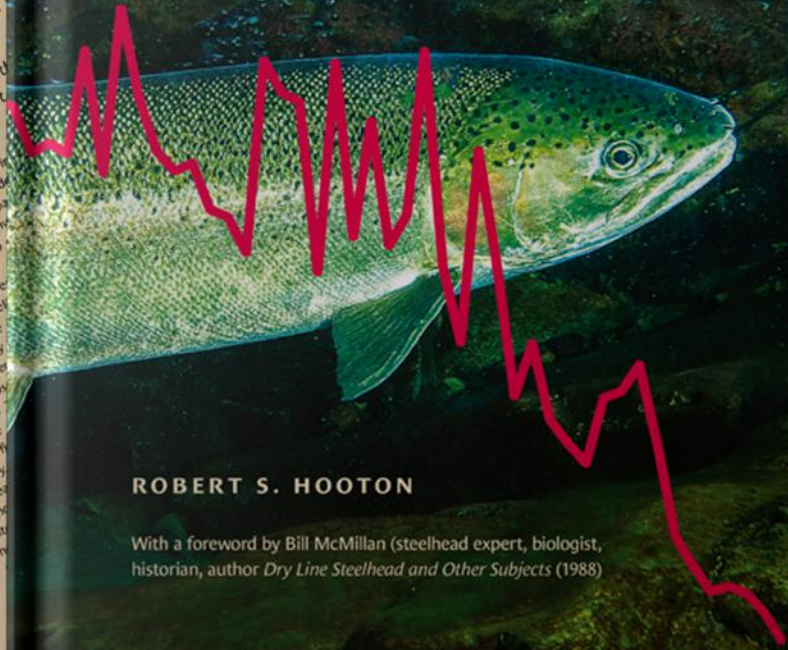
“Neglected by politicians, harmed
crippled by the insatiable demand for
fisheries, a great run of wild steelhead
a leading voice on wild steelhead
wreckage and laments the
would be a travesty.”

—Mark Hume, author
Correspondent

Bob Hooton was born in
Vancouver and resided
in the rapidly expanding
Lower Mainland environment
ment long enough to
a BSc from the University of
Simon Fraser University
passion for steelhead
dominated life
began with day
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Managing to Zero

THE THOMPSON STEELHEAD TRAVESTY



ROBERT S. HOOTON

With a foreword by Bill McMillan (steelhead expert, biologist,
historian, author *Dry Line Steelhead and Other Subjects* (1988))



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