

Catch Salmon BC

Newsletter: August, 2005



Catchsalmonbc.com is moving forward with its first newsletter ever!

I will focus on fly opportunities along the BC coastline for salmon and steelhead, and also give some of the better gear-fishing opportunities, too.

If there is anything else you would like me to add, let me know.

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Trailhead Resort



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Interesting Offers on catchsalmonbc.com: Few spaces left in fall schedule.

Cap'n Peter



Summary: Peter Hovey's main interest is filling your tub on Swiftsure Bank. If you are a fly fisherman, ask him if you can toss a fly overboard. You'll be amazed at how coho can be their own worst enemies fighting one another to your fly.

Lodge of the Month: Trailhead Resort, Port Renfrew, B.C..

Port Renfrew – Far Away Close By

Pick up the twisty, up and down Highway 14 from Sooke and be in Port Renfrew in an hour. That is part of the appeal of sneaking away to some where remote but pretty much in the backyard of anyone starting from Victoria by vehicle.

On the high points down the mountainous spine of rock leading north west is the entire Juan de Fuca Strait laid out most summer days as smooth water all the way across to the American side and Cape Flattery.

On the way, pass the first Pacific swells come ashore at Jordan River where surfers can be seen in their well advised wet suits - the water is a nippy eight- to ten-degrees Celsius - carving up and down the waves. You may wish to stop en route and three, well-marked beaches of white sand lie at your feet once stepping from the car: Sombrio, French and China.

Closer to Port Renfrew, is the first turn off for the botanical beaches where at low tide you and your children can look down into a world of fascinating colour and shapes in the intertidal beaches. Port Renfrew is just down the road, now with a facelift and development sprucing up the old logging and fishing town. Two neat new restaurants on the main frontage include the funky San Juan Bistro where you can down a cappuccino and wolf a meal while waiting for the West Coast Trail Bus. And the Coastal Kitchen Café with its large-portion pub-style dinners features traditional and west coast entrees.

A block past the Coastal Kitchen take the right turn into Trailhead Resort and Charters and you are home for your stay. All facilities are new with overhead suites with kitchenettes, store, large new cedary meal and activities lodge (with a nice out-of-the-rain deck as well) and three more

individual chalet style buildings for larger party use, set among trees over-looking the main wharves.

“We’re into taking care of a party completely,” Peter Hovey, owner and manger says, and this includes all meals, with a continental style breakfast at 5:30 am, lunch served on the fishing banks, crab appetizers in the lodge at 6:00 pm and dinners with an open bar following.

“We focus on providing an offshore experience and have invested in powerful and speedy boats.” Peter is referring to Silver Streak boats in Sooke that has pioneered innovations in welded aluminum craft. Peter’s main craft comes with ample space out of the rain and its own propane stove for heat. In true sport boat style the stern deck is wide and long, giving an angler room to fight his catch. The cockpit seats come with coil springs and shocks to dampen the waves.

After a bumping hour long ride through the rollers out to the Banks, the electric downrigger balls are lowered with their darting Tomic Plugs to 150 feet where the Chinook cruise the depths in search of feed. The ocean is so abundant that full limits are taken almost every day.

“Halibut are our specialty,” Peter says and his new colour computer screen with its many entered waypoints puts his craft directly above the many flatties shifting on the ocean floor. Thus begins the muscle straining retrieve that is lifting, or so it seems, a grand piano, until the 20 – 50 pound (they can go to 400 pounds) ‘chickens’, as smaller halibut are called, are within reach of the trusty harpoon. “We send people home with a large supply of fish. That’s what we aim to do and our customers keep coming back.”

Sidebar: Things to Consider:

If you arrive from the Lower Mainland by ferry add another hour to get to Sooke where you are one hour from Port Renfrew.

Bring along Gravol, patches or seasickness wrist bands – you will be out on the open ocean.

Bring a large cooler, 100 quart or bigger. You’ll be surprised how much you catch. All fish are cleaned, filleted, iced and vacuum packed – a good deal.

Trailhead offers two all-inclusive package deals: two day/three nights for \$1200 Canadian per person in a threesome and \$950 each in a foursome; three day/four nights for \$1790 per person in a threesome, and \$1400 each for a foursome.

Other Port Renfrew attractions:

Kayaking and diving may be arranged in town.

Killer whales, humpback and grey whales take up summer residence in the area. You will be mightily impressed when you see one of these ten ton and higher mammals fin so quickly they launch their entire bodies into the air.

Known world wide, The West Coast trail begins in Port Renfrew. Register at the government facility and take the water bus across to Thrasher Rock to begin your week long trek to Bamfield. This trail was built in the late 1800s as a life saving trail to rescue people from ocean liners.

The coastline is known as the Graveyard of the Pacific for the hundreds of vessels that have foundered on its rocks. Pieces of them still remain along the coast between Port Renfrew and Bamfield.

Up the coast from the infamous Nitinat Bar where even today the inexperienced lose boats and sometimes themselves, the lovely Tsuisiat Falls drop a curtain of water on the beach so perfectly it looks like something man made in a Disneyland setting.

Fishy Facts Box:

Port Renfrew's fame is built upon its fabulous fishery for Chinook from every hatchery and natural run from Robertson Creek and Nitinat hatchery all the way around to include Puget Sound and the many sub-components of the Fraser River.

Sockeye, coho and pink salmon are taken as incidental catches in the strong Chinook fishery from Camper Creek to Owen Point. Move out half a mile to experience 40 or more fish days. This summer 23,000,000 pink bound for the Fraser River are already moseying by.

Trailhead Resorts runs offshore boats to Swiftsure Bank some 24 miles from Owen Point. The off shore bank seethes with bird, bait and fish life, an almost mesmerizing abundance.

The San Juan, Gordon, Harris and Lens rivers contain, coho and Chinook salmon, summer and winter steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout.

Contact Info:

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My Times Colonist Newspaper Fishing Column: Saltwater Beach Fishing for pink salmon.

Summer Time and The Fishing Is Beachy

It's that time Gershwin fans and beach devotees. Your girl friend takes a blanket, a book and a drink. You take a fly rod, a fly line and a fly. She gets what she wants, a summer read, a summer tan and a summer fling; well sort of. The fling happens after the day at the beach.

You stride across the shingle stones at Nile Creek, Oyster River, Kingfisher Resort or any of the more than dozen volunteer enhanced stream mouths. For now the annual many months meeting of pink then coho then chum salmon has begun and action will be simple and the catching easy.

Comprised largely of very flat, stone or sand covered bottom, seldom even 10 feet deep the beaches from Qualicum to Campbell River welcomed fish in the middle of last week. You need to take yourself to the action. Don't delay. You will need a 6- to 8-weight rod, the longer the better, such as the Loop 11' 2" or Sage 11' 6"; distance is a distinct advantage and a longer rod casts farther, particularly when you are in the water to your waist and thus only 3 feet tall above it. All casters know the rule: no matter how far you cast, the fish are ten feet beyond your fly. So maybe you want to choose a short Spey rod, for example, the 11'6" Loop, Green line, 9-weight. This is a rod that likes a vigorous power stroke for an over head cast, or side arm that fires out 100 feet of line plus leader.

You will want a floating fly line as the water is shallow – your fly is what does the sinking, and you need to suspend it from a snaggy connection during your strip. A long front end taper allows a longer cast and better turn-over for the fly. A clear tip does not spook the fish. Leaders should be 10 to 15 feet – for the distance - and tapered to 6 lbs so flies maintain unhindered action. Some ardent practitioners use up to 30 feet of leader. As all fly guys know, the longer the leader the longer the cast, but for some it also means more 'wind knots' so strike a balance.

The greater weight rod also gives you a decided advantage in windy conditions where you must stop your tip just after 11 o'clock to make a bullet shape in the fly line so it can punch through the air much like a bullet through a wall. Make sure to wash your line and gear each day in freshwater with some dish washing liquid to remove the grunge that saltwater leaves on your line, thus making it sticky and uncastable.

And your fly, well, okay, it's many flies. Remember the California Neil, the Pearl Micky and the small green/blue streamer creations favoured where fish are preparing to make the change from breathing saltwater to freshwater?

These fish, today, are still actively feeding and bright. Thus 1" baitfish imitations should pepper your beach box. And this year's current hotty, is the Courtney Killer. A sort of streamer with a few white polar bear fibres for a tail on a size 6 stainless streamer hook. Then a wrapping of silver tinsel and a further wrap of Lazor Strip, in pink.

At the head end, a medium-small set of bead chain eyes is tied in with hot or dark pink 6/0 thread and glued down. Then the final touch: small Globrite Chenille in pink wrapped from behind the eyes to in front and then glued down. That's it. Or get them at Oceanside Outfitters in Qualicum Beach. They're making them up by the dozens these days.

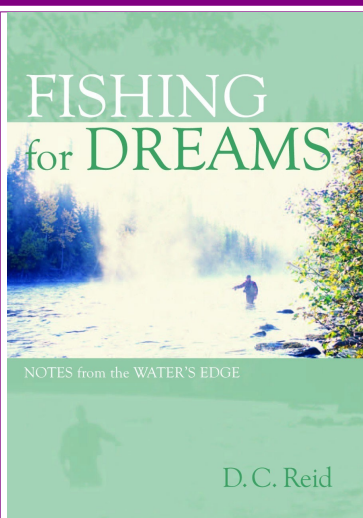
The other good fly this week is a size 8 stainless, short shank hook with a small brass bead head, green thread body and a rib of silver ala a Doc Spratley. And that's the deal. The fish were as far as 50 yards, i.e., a distance too far and as close as 20 feet, i.e., a distance almost too close. And hitting with abandon. Now you start singing: Fish are jumping and your girlfriend's good looking.

Tip of the Month: Getting your leaders right.

Figure eight knots are much stronger than blood knots (and a whole lot easier to tie) as well as double, triple and quadruple surgeon's knots.

The best way to make up leaders for fishing salmon and steelhead is to, first, put a pre-made loop on the end of the fly line, or make a loop in the last inch of the fly line. In either case, take a bobbin of thread and fling it around the line in circles to lay down a bed of line, then glue it in with head cement. When this is dry, take three feet of 15/25 pound mono and put a figure eight knot on both ends. Then insert the loop from the flyline in the loop on the mono, finishing with putting the other mono loop through the flyline loop and pull snug. Do the same procedure with 15/12 lb test, again with figure eight knots on each end. Finish with 6/15 lb test, figure eight knotted on one end and with the tag end, tie a fly on with an Improved Clinch Knot.

Always put the loop from the 'upper' or attached fly line/leader through the next looped piece of leader and put the 'lower' tag end/loop through the attached 'upper' loop. This prevents you making a mistake and undoing a connection, and then tossing the leader/fly, unattached, into the river.



New Things On catchsalmonbc.com: Fishing For Dreams

Fishing for Dreams

My new book, **Fishing for Dreams**, has just been published and features stories about many places that I have fished in both Alberta and British Columbia. Please see catchsalmonbc.com for further details. A measly \$16.95. Incredible value!

New Things On catchsalmonbc.com: Spey Conclave

Spey Conclave, Aug 27 – 28, Victoria, B.C.

I will be offering another weekend to learn the Spey on August 27 -28. If you have seen others casting these big rods and are impressed with how far they cast a fly, or if you have a rod and don't think you are getting enough out of it, come along. I'll be

covering all the casts and will have a lot of different manufacturer's lines, reels and rods for you to try - before buying. You will receive an article from BC Outdoors on casting so that you can trouble shoot when on your own, as well as a buyer's guide. We will talk about the guide so you have a better understanding about the new and expensive gear tempting your VISA.

Interesting Offers on catchalmonbc.com:

Few spaces left in fall schedule.

I am pretty well booked for the fall salmon season, but I have a few spaces left and am offering them at a pretty good discount. My focus, while we catch fish, will be to pass along useful information so that you may improve your understanding of catching salmon and steelhead – and thus catch a whole lot more on your own.

Maximum Salmon: For all who have purchased my book Maximum Salmon, many thanks for your continued patience. I am told that it should be out in September, 2005.

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