

Upland Idaho

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|---------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Date | November 7-11, 2005 | Time | All day every day |
| Location | Humptulips & Satsop Rivers near Aberdeen, Washington (south end of the Olympic Peninsula) | Weather | Mostly sunny: Mon. – Wed. Rainy: Thurs. & Fri. |
| Fish Species | Chinook Salmon (Kings) Coho Salmon (Silvers) Chum Salmon (Dogs) | Size Range | Kings 20 - 40+ lbs Silvers 8 – 15 lbs Chums 10 – 25+ lbs |
| Fish Caught | Several of each species; results varied by day and fisherman. I hooked about 15 Kings and landed 3 and landed a half dozen Silvers and a half dozen Chum. | | |
| Tackle Used | Corkies & yarn; jigs ---- Used a baitcast reel on a 12-25 lb rod using 25 lb test. | | |
| Techniques | Drifted corkies and yarn in the current for all three species. Used primarily chartreuse, pink and orange corkies and yarn. Jigged for silvers in the slower water when the fish weren't moving. I used a pink and white jig. Note: Everyone used different colors and everyone caught fish. I sometimes wonder how much color really matters. | | |
| Comments | Wow, what a trip! We all had a blast smoking lines and ripping lips! | | |

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Saturday - Getting to Washington

The trip started out with my uncle John, who plans this annual trip, telling me that he would call me when he got to Mountain Home and the plan would be to meet them out on the freeway in Meridian at 7:30 AM. I could have met them at 5:30 due to the excitement and anxiety I had for the trip. It was the amount of sleep I got as a child on Christmas Eve or the night before the deer hunt as a teenager when my father, brothers, grandpas, uncles and a few friends would camp at our deer camp below the Pig, as we called the mountain above Meadow, Utah.

It turned out that my uncle Lynn, who is from Meadow, and my uncle John and his friend Scott both from the Heber Valley in Utah ran across an accident. They stopped and helped a young lady until the ambulance arrived. Thankfully she was alright. The trip was delayed for a short time but the adventure wasn't over. We still had 8 hours of driving pulling a boat to get to our hotel in Montesano, WA. We were to meet some of John's other friends at the hotel the following Monday evening. Dale, whom I had met on a previous trip, Paul and Dale's father, Steve who were also from the Heber Valley.

We enjoyed seeing the Bighorn Sheep along the cliffs while traveling through the Columbia Gorge. Also, a visit to Multnomah Falls and to the Bonneville dam and fish hatchery is a must if you're in the area but we had all seen it and didn't stop. We stopped at the Walmart in Centralia, WA along I-5 to get fishing licenses and groceries. As we

left the store, the wind was blowing ferociously, stacking up shopping carts at the east end of the parking lot. It was quite the spectacle seeing shopping carts racing across the parking lot and trying to dodge them as we pulled out. We continued north along I-5 making our way through all the debris falling on the freeway. We started getting pretty nervous pulling the boat and I wouldn't have wanted to be one of those diesels pulling a trailer. Within a few miles of exiting I-5, we witnessed the first car that slammed on his brakes to avoid a huge tree that had fallen blocking all southbound traffic. As we got to the hotel and watched the news, there were still traffic delays being reported due to the tree blocking the southbound freeway.

Flashback to the 2003 Washington fishing trip – floods

This brought back memories of the 2003 fishing trip to the same area. Our week was a week of record breaking rainfall. Aberdeen received 7" in a day and Seattle had received 5" on that same day. The news consisted of cities being flooded, rivers overflowing their banks and pictures of vehicles dodging Salmon as they swam across the highway. The streets in Aberdeen were flooded and there were lots of sandbags. Needless to say, it was the wrong week to be fishing in Washington. We spent one day at the beach and a few days on rivers like the Cowlitz and Lewis that had dams that provided fishable water.

We fished the first morning on the Humptulips River before the flooding was real bad. There was a fisherman that had pulled his new truck down on the gravel bar and started fishing. He must not have noticed the river rising. The road entering the river had a few low spots that made it conducive to forming a nice side channel of the river. The road was impassable by truck and it was just a matter of time before water was running through the seat of his new truck.

Near the end of the week when the river was "sort of fishable", we took this same road down to the gravel bar and noticed movement in the muddy puddle in the road. It was a Coho Salmon that didn't make it back to the river and was stuck to die. Dale netted it, walked past some construction workers, and we turned it loose in the river. I can't imagine what was going through their minds.

This was my first and only trip with my uncles to Washington until this year. My uncle John has been fishing the rivers around the Olympic Peninsula since the early 90's. I'll remember this trip for its adventures even though we caught some fish. I was remembered for catching the smallest Coho ever seen 'The Jack'. I've heard all the jokes so don't even start!

Sunday – Scouting the rivers

We weren't sure what the weather would be like when we left Utah and Idaho because even the weather reports can be questionable. We take a chance every year we make this trip and we just hope we hit it right. Luckily, we couldn't have asked for better conditions this year. The ideal time to hit the rivers is the week after heavy rains when the rivers run high and then as they are lowering to normal conditions. The fish move out of the ocean

and into the rivers when the water is high and then settle into the holes as the rivers drop. You want to be fishing as the rivers are lowering and you have a foot or two of visibility. The rivers in this area look like chocolate milk when they are running high and after the rivers settle for a while the clarity improves to the point where the fish can see to good.

After attending church in Satsop we drove to the Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulips rivers to decide where we would start fishing on Monday morning. They were catching Chum and a few Silvers at the hole we stopped at on the Satsop. We called the hatchery on the Humptulips and they said the Silvers were in the river. We didn't arrive at the Humptulips until after dark because of our little excursion on the upper Wynoochee but the river level looked good on the Humptulips.

We scouted the Wynoochee as a backup in case the other rivers flooded. We had been told that Fish and Game catch fish below the dam and release them in the upper Wynoochee above the lake. A local fisherman told us it could be good because the locals generally don't make the 30 mile drive on the dirt road up to the river because of the plentiful rivers with good fishing much closer.

We drove the road up into the Olympic Mountains and walked down to a bridge above the lake that crossed the river. There were Salmon and possibly Steelhead in the river alright. They swam around in the deep crystal clear aqua pool under the bridge. We began envisioning hundreds of fish stacked up under Wynoochee Falls two miles above where the road was closed this time of year. Of course, we had to find out if our wildest dreams could come true and we started the adventure.



Not too far into the hike, we ran into some Roosevelt Elk that we were able to watch for a while until they noticed our presence. It was hunting season so they didn't stick around. We also stopped at another place along the river and saw five River Otters swim down the river past us. The views were breathtaking of the river, moss covered trees and snow covered mountains that the low thin clouds seemed to cling to.

There were several tributaries that ran into the river that had some pristine water falls right next to the road. As we approached the falls, first having gone the wrong way making it longer than two miles, I began to quicken my pace to satisfy my curiosity. The Falls were beautiful but there were no fish swimming in its pools. It ended up being a nice hike!



Monday – Jigging for Coho

We found ourselves on the Humptulips River on Monday morning and we didn't take the drift boat. In fact, we never did use the boat either year that I came with my uncles. The rivers were blown out in 2003 and we were able to get some private access along the Satsop river on this trip. We were the only fishermen on our side of the river, which really surprised me from my past experiences at this location. There were several fishermen on the other side of the river.

We hoped to catch our limit of two Silvers; 1 hatchery and 1 wild. You had to release Kings while Chums were only kept by a few fishermen that liked them smoked. Some also used the eggs from the hens to fish for Steelhead in December. I've never tried Chum Salmon so I don't know how they taste. Silvers and Kings look just alike but they have a few different characteristics besides size. Kings have black gums and big black spots on their backs while Silvers have white gums and smaller black spots on their backs. I could be catching any species on this river!

We fished all morning in the current using corkies with no bites. The fish weren't moving. We were getting ready to leave when Scott, who has made many fishing trips to Alaska, said "let me try some jigs in the slower water up the river". I was interested and followed him up the river without my pole to watch. He had a fish on within a few casts. I went running back down the river to fetch my pole and tell my uncles the good news. We all headed up the river and Scott gave all of us some jigs that he had tied.

I tried a few spots with no luck and was then determined to make my way out to a gravel bar that was an island. I could see some good holes that couldn't be fished unless you were on that gravel bar. The water was muddy so I couldn't see the bottom. I started across the river and the water was at the top of my waders and getting deeper. I fished another location with no luck and then came back to the gravel bar to try crossing again in a different location. Much to my amazement, I found a spot to cross that was only waist deep. I landed my first Coho after just a few casts. It wasn't long before I landed my second Coho. I yelled to the others to come and fish the hole. Scott's and Lynn's response, when they saw where I was fishing, was "how did you get out there?". I told them where I crossed and we all hooked fish with varied success of landing them.

I heard a fish splashing up river where John was fishing and decided to walk up and take some pictures. He had landed a few Coho and had a nice fish and told me that it was one of the nicer Coho's he had landed. I was joking around with John and said "I bet my fish is bigger". He said "no way". I went and got my fish and weighed them and he had me by a half pound. He had caught a 13 lb Coho and mine was a little over 12 lbs. I opened myself up for that one, as you might imagine. We fished with jigs for the rest



of the day and I ended up landing 4 Coho, snagging another one and hooking a few more that got off. Jigging was a blast!

Tuesday – The Running of the Kings

We fished the Satsop River having private access that Dale had obtained the year before. Dale, Paul and Steve joined us on this day later in the morning. It was another beautiful day for fishing as long as you were dressed warm. We made our way out into the river where we were fishing about waist deep and fished a seam where muddy water and clear water were coming together.

It wasn't long before John yelled "fish on" and was walking down the river. That fish raced straight down river never leaving the water with no sign of stopping as his line snapped. If lines could smoke it would have been smoking. His reply was "that had to be a King".

Minutes later I had the same thing happen to me. I have never felt power like that before. I struggled to keep my rod in the air. After rigging back up, I instantly had another fish that I got to play a little longer but still ended with the same result. The enormous fish jutted out of the water a couple of times as it kept fighting further and further down stream as the hook popped out of its mouth. Wow! I wondered if I could land one of these fish without a boat.

Lynn was next to yell "fish on". It took Lynn down as far as he could walk. I watched as he fought the fish and it was quite a show. I was thinking sweet! that fish is still on. He played that fish for probably 30 minutes and then landed a nice King. Just after that he had another fish on and landed another nice King. Lynn landing those Kings gave me hope.



I don't remember the sequence of events after that but suffice it to say we all hooked into some nice Kings. I do remember the next fish that I had on, which was probably the most memorable for the day. I hooked a huge King right in front of me and it flew completely out of the water angling away from me and creating a huge splash as it entered back into the river! It was a huge buck and only beginning the myriad of acrobatic stunts that it pulled as it swam up the river and then down the river. It was a sight of nature that I'll always remember. It got so far below me and on the opposite side of the current that I was worried about losing all the line off my reel and figured it was a lost cause.

As I was holding my rod getting ready to clamp down on the line and break off, the strangest thing happened. That King swam across the current and swam straight up the bank on my side of the river in the calm water. I reeled as fast as I could to get the line back on my reel. It swam within 20 feet and something startled it because it darted straight down stream again on a second run without leaving the water. I figured he had to

be wearing down due to all the acrobatics and the twenty minute fight to this point. I was right. He slogged around in the water and I was able to inch him little by little back into my direction. I started getting excited because I knew I had him until the second turn of events happened. He swam over to the bank and my line was tight but the wiggling ceased. I made my way down river and found that he had tied me into a log on the bank and was nowhere to be seen.

I was close to landing another fish. If I would have had a netter I probably could have landed it. I had fought him for 20-30 minutes and had him within a few yards while somebody was grabbing the net. The fish turned at just the right angle trying to get away and the hook popped out.

“Fish on” I yelled once again. I had a fish hit with power but it wasn’t ripping line like the other and I could tell it was a smaller fish. As it flew into the air I could see that it was a hen Chum. The locals yell “walking the dog” when anyone walks down the river to land a Chum. Many consider it a trash fish. I had never caught a Chum before so I was eager not only to land a chum but to land my first fish of the day. The fight wasn’t even comparable to the King and before long I had it on the bank. After entering the river from the ocean and losing their chrome, Chums are a greenish color with black and purple stripes and teeth that stick out of their mouths. Their teeth look like jowls on a dog, therefore getting its nickname the dog fish. I think they make for some cool pictures especially for those who haven’t seen them before.



Dale’s Chum showing stripes and teeth

I had on another King that I was fighting and the hook jarred loose and flew back through the air pounding me in the chest. I realized that I was horsing it to much. I was learning from my mistakes. I was so amazed by their power especially in the current. I had hooked nine Kings by this time and was very frustrated at not landing any of them.

I yelled “fish on” for the tenth time. The fight was on again! After the battle I finally landed my first King. It was a hen and not the biggest fish but it was my first King and I was very excited. I finally got one in the net.



Wednesday – Landing the Hogs

We came back to the Satsop to hook into some more Kings and hoped for a run of Silvers. We needed meat in the freezer but I think we were between the major Silver runs on this river.

It was a slow day of fishing for me and most others for the majority of the morning with the exception of a nice buck Chum I had landed and a few other hits. The bigger Chums have some good fight in them and are very fun to catch.

As I was about ready to go to lunch I got the slam right in front of me. It felt like a log and stayed right on the bottom where I hooked him. I applied some side pressure with very little movement from the fish. I could tell he was big because I couldn't budge him. I told the guys below me to keep fishing. I wanted to keep him here as long as I could even though it wasn't up to me because that fish was going anywhere it wanted. I applied side pressure for probably ten minutes while the fish stayed in the vicinity. The fish started to slowly move down river as I anticipated the run. I moved down into a different group of local guys where the fish was content to struggle without making a run.

I applied more side pressure for another five minutes and could tell the natives were getting restless. I had the feeling they thought I was playing the fish longer than needful. At this point I honestly could not budge it and I didn't want a fish this size making a run if I could tire it out some more. I applied more pressure but I could not reel in any line. I learned from the day before not to apply too much pressure or the hook would rip through the flesh. A couple guys started telling me to lift the rod and then reel on the way down. I was thinking "dude", I may be a rookie with these big fish but I've learned that much in my fishing career.

I attempted to lift the rod as they had told me but I couldn't. There was still too much pressure and I knew I would lose the fish if I tried applying any more pressure. As I sat there still trying to please the locals, the fish went into a frenzy and made the run that I had anticipated. I was hoping I had a chance since I had had tussled with him in the current for twenty minutes. The fish was off and there was no stopping him as he was peeling line off my reel like it was nothing. I didn't dare set the drag any tighter. This provided the chance for me to get below the fishermen to avoid their comments, or so I thought. Luckily for me he stopped but was very active swimming back and forth still never leaving the water.

After a half hour, I finally got to the point where I could lift the rod and get line back on the reel. I started inching him closer and closer as he made his way into the calmer water. Dale offered to net him but I said I still didn't think he was done. I got him closer and one of the locals grabbed the net. That sent the fish into another run back into the middle of the river. He was still sloshing around as he went back down with the current. This fish wasn't giving up. I got him back over into the shallow water and by this time I could hear comments like "he's still playing that fish!". I joked by saying "I have all day" but they probably didn't see the humor.

I inched the fish closer and closer as one of the locals grabbed the net again. The fish took off again but not as far. Finally the fisherman helping me walked down and netted the King and he exclaimed “nice fish!”. He held the fish out of the water and the heckling ceased. I heard comments like “welcome to the hog club” and “that one’s going to be hard to beat”. John told me that it rivaled a few of the biggest Kings that he’s landed on his fishing excursions. He mentioned Dale’s fish from 2003 and my grandpa’s fish that he caught when he made the trip to Washington.

I was very weak and had a difficult time holding it up for pictures because of its powerful movements. It was the fish of my dreams estimated by many to be in the 40+ lb range. I had seen 70+ lb fish landed when I went to Alaska on the Kenai River but catching this fish from the bank on this river meant a lot to me.

I sat down and took a long lunch hoping to gain some strength. My arms and back were throbbing. After relishing in the victory feeling very fortunate and replaying the events in my mind I was ready to hit the river again.

It wasn’t even ten minutes and I could tell I had another big fish on out of the same hole. Nobody gave me any grief this go-around. Landing this fish was almost identical to the sequence of events in landing the first but taking a little less time. I was astounded as it was netted and brought out of the water. This fish rivaled the first fish I had caught except it was a little more chrome. I couldn’t believe it and neither could the others. It was another monster! I asked Lynn and John if this meant the end of ‘The Jack’ jokes. “Not even” they replied.

I only landed the three fish on the day but I will always remember it as they day I landed “the hogs”.



Thursday – Too slow for Coho

We found ourselves back on the Humptulips River after hearing rumors about the fantastic fishing the day before. The Silvers were moving!

The river had dropped considerably since Monday and the holes I had fished on Monday weren't there any more. The rain was pouring as I made my way out to the same gravel bar I had fished on Monday. I hooked a fish on my second cast but it didn't take long before he was off. I had one other hit that morning and that was it. It was slow fishing.

We had found out that the nets were in the river meaning the fish won't be moving into the river today. Dale, John and Scott had each landed 1 Coho that morning. Dale had latched into a King that took him down the river, over the falls and further down the river until he finally landed it. Other than a few other hookups, it was a slow drizzly morning.



Dale and his crew went back to the Satsop River and did very well including a few Silvers for the freezer. We moved up stream to perhaps find some moving fish from the day before. We had no luck there either as nobody caught a fish except for a Chum I had landed if you can count it as a catch.

I saw a school of fish swimming just below the surface up river in the dirty water just in front of me. I cast my jig in front of the school and felt the take. I set the hook and got a few minutes of sloshing and that was it. I had caught a chum that was on its last fin. I haven't seen anything much uglier in my life. I didn't even want to take the hook out of its mouth. I shouldn't even count it but I did to avoid getting skunked!



We called it the 'crypt fish'. I didn't know a fish could survive with flesh that deteriorated and falling off. I'll tell anyone that asks for Salmon that I kept this fish just for them.

Friday – The John and Scott show

It was back to the Satsop River to the same place we had fished on Tuesday and Wednesday. Lynn dropped us off and he spent the morning in Aberdeen having his truck looked at because it wasn't running properly. I found myself hooking into a half dozen fish including a couple of Kings but only landing 2 Chum.

I don't know how Dale and Paul did because Dale was taking his and Paul's pictures for the most part. I'm sure they did well because Dale has a knack for finding fish. I remember taking several pictures of John's and Scott's Kings and Chums and a Silver. It was a rather slow day for me but John and Scott were having a blast. Lynn also hooked a few nice fish that afternoon once he got back to the river. We all had our good days and our slow days but never bad days.



As the evening wore down and everyone was leaving the river, I yelled "one last cast". That usually gets you at least three more casts. As I drifted my corky for the last time and feeling the lead thump along the bottom, the thumping stopped. I had come to the end of my drift. That was that until the next time we drive to the coast and pound the waters in hopes to land the 'Hog'.