

Wishing You Were Here Fishing Report

September 2, 2002



Hello one and all. Well we have hit the end of the summer season and fall is quickly getting under way. To recap the summer season I will have to say that the Chum on the Kitimat were astounding this year. This was the best Chum season we have had for the past few years. Just have a look at our website on the photo page and you will see some great pictures of some huge Chum. We even had a few more world records broken. I will send more details of these record catches when they are confirmed. The largest King of the year honors goes to Mick Donnelly of Scotland. Mick landed his big fish while we were fishing for Steelhead on the Skeena using a small 6ft Redington Rod with 14 lb Stren. The Steelhead are pouring into the Skeena in great numbers. We have had numerous 30-40 hook up days already. This includes a lot of summer run Coho. This is so far the best summer run season we have had in years. They are beginning to make a great come back after the commercial fishermen almost wiped them out. The largest Steelhead August goes to Chris Hutchinson from the good old USA. Chris first landed a 24 pound brute and then 5 minutes later hooked and landed a 30 pound monster. A true fish of a lifetime. Both the Chinook photo and the big Steelhead photo can be viewed on our website.

While there are lots of fish in the Skeena right now the weather is throwing a crimp into things. For the last week and a half the Skeena has ranged from barely fishable to down right blown out. However the long range forecast is calling for less rain and some what of a drying period. We did need the rain as we have had on of the driest years on record. As the water begins to clean, watch for some of the best fishing of the season.

On a serious note I have attached the email addresses of some of our politicians. Whether or not you are fishing with us but love to catch Steelhead and Salmon you have a vested interest in our great fishery. Every year the commercial fleets catch and kill millions of fish. We and other anglers from all over the world have a duty to try and protect our resource. We all use it. Again whether or not you are fishing with us I urge you to write a short letter to our ministers calling for them to take a hard look at the commercial fishery and the damage that it is doing to our rivers and yours. The monetary value of these great fisheries is measured in BILLIONS of Dollars. Compare that to the small return for the huge amount of fish being taken to by the commercial fleet and you can see that it does not pay to wipe out entire stocks. Our fishery is still healthy but needs some help to keep it that way before it is too late.

Hello Steelhead Fans!!

Here is some news about what we are up to in the fight against commercial interception of our steelhead.

Your assistance would be appreciated in the form of a quick message to the government people listed at the site. Saying you support the work of the NCSA...are against methods of commercial fishing that adversely affect steelhead...are against FOC management that doesn't fully recognize the socio-economic importance of steelhead etc..etc..

<http://www.flyfishing.about.com/>

For guides; please forward the website url and request your clients also send messages.

Below is an article stating some facts as well as the addresses of our ministers. Thanks for your concern. Tight Lines

Justin Gyger Westcoast Fishing Adventures www.westcoastfishing.ca

Commercial Nets Threaten Skeena Steelhead

NCSA Update 29/07/02--We are right in the middle of the peak steelhead run and unfortunately commercial fishing continues in the approaches to both the Skeena and Nass systems. However, due to your e-mails and messages, Fisheries officials in Prince Rupert now know the fishery is under intense scrutiny from concerned anglers all over the world. Public pressure needs to continue. Please monitor this website for further updates and news.

North Coast Steelhead Alliance

The world's greatest collection of trophy steelhead rivers has once again come under attack. Wild steelhead seeking to return to such rivers as the Copper, Bulkley, Kispiox, Sustut, Babine, Morice and the Blackwater are about to be put in harms way.

The commercial net fishery for salmon is gearing up to intercept a larger than anticipated run of sockeye in the approaches to the Skeena river mouth. Unfortunately, their actions will negatively impact both the fish and the anglers and businesses who rely on them upstream. The resident anglers, guides and tourists who fish these rivers do not question the legitimacy of commercial fishing for salmon. It is a necessary part of northwest BC's economy. What these anglers and professional sports fishing businesses object to is the continuing disregard for steelhead and upstream users by the bureaucracy that manages the commercial fishery. The bottom line: The BC commercial fishery is essentially constructed to harvest salmon with little real regard for the numbers of steelhead caught in the nets. Too many steelhead are being killed by salmon nets in a non-selective, wasteful commercial fishery.

A prime example of the disregard shown to steelhead by federal fisheries officials was given last year. In 2001, federal fisheries knowingly sacrificed early-run steelhead by allowing almost 500 boats to net inside the mouth of the Skeena River during late July and early August. It was

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called a 'selective gillnet fishery'. It was an unmitigated disaster for early-run steelhead. Most estimates placed the loss of September stocks of wild steelhead at approximately 42 percent! Many of those fish that managed to escape immediate death in the nets were scarred, possibly not left healthy enough to spawn. The nets also severely impacted the mid-size steelhead and many fish from 14 to 18 pounds were missing. Smaller steelhead, being able to slip through the nets, appeared upriver in seemingly large numbers.

And now the netting has begun again and the critical time period is upon us. If this kind of commercial netting is allowed to happen again this year, especially during the weeks of late July and early August when steelhead are congregating off the river mouths, the results will be the same. The wild steelhead populations of the Skeena River system simply cannot sustain such pressure. Moreover, anglers and related businesses dependant on these important stocks will suffer needlessly.

For some time now, responsible biologists, anglers and private citizens in British Columbia, Japan, Europe, South America, and the US have realized that the commercial net fishery in northern BC must be managed from a position which recognizes and protects the value of wild British Columbia steelhead. The role of such a resource in the economy and image of British Columbia can no longer be ignored and relegated to second-class citizenship.

A group of concerned anglers, guides, and other dependant businesses, has formed to fight back and to keep the angling public informed about the waste and devastation brought about by a commercial fishery which does not adequately consider northern BC's irreplaceable stocks of wild summer run steelhead. The group is called "The North Coast Steelhead Alliance" and representatives from the various groups, both in BC and the US , have joined together to fight back.

Members of the group include Keith Douglas, from the Northern BC Steelhead Guides Association; Mary Lou Burleigh, past director of The Bulkley Valley Chapter of The Wild Steelhead Society; Gordon Wolfe, current President of the Bulkley Valley chapter of the Steelhead Society of BC; John Brockley ,resident angler; Lani Waller of Silver Hilton Steelhead Lodge; Sharon Robertson, Federation of Flyfishers, BC; plus many other knowledgeable professionals who are actively concerned.

This newly formed group is just beginning what will undoubtedly be a long, hard struggle for proper management and recognition of steelhead.

You can help. E-mail or fax the government officials listed above and ask for:

1. Timing: the timing of commercial gill netting activities directly impacts on the number of wild steelhead escaping the nets to travel up into the inland river systems. Commercial gill netting must be limited or completely restricted during the crucial peak of the summer steelhead run. At a minimum, commercial gill netting must not be permitted on consecutive days. Rather, commercial gill netting should be restricted to a pattern of one day of gill netting, followed by three to four days of no gill netting in Statistical areas of 4-9, 4-12 and 4-15 and 3-2, 3-3 and 3-7.
 2. Location: During the peak of the wild steelhead run, commercial gill netters should be prohibited from fishing within Statistical Area 4-15 covering the mouth of the Skeena River. In areas 4-9 and 4-12 use of weedlines should be mandatory. In statistical Area 3, similar restrictions must be imposed to ensure adequate numbers of wild steelhead are permitted to enter the Nass and Skeena River systems.
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North Coast Steelhead Alliance is a coalition of individuals, businesses and organizations recognized as leaders in the world famous recreational fishing and tourism industry in northern British Columbia. We represent the interest of thousands of users that include residents of BC, residents from other parts of Canada as well as from other countries. These users contribute millions of dollars to the economy of British Columbia each year in pursuit of the world famous wild summer run steelhead. We are on the front lines of the movement to maintain the high quality of this precious natural resource for the future use by all those who wish to venture to northwest British Columbia to participate in the fishing experience.