



## Little Qualicum River

The Little Qualicum River drains a watershed of approximately 250 km<sup>2</sup> (about 100 km<sup>2</sup> more than the Big Qualicum!) The main water body on the river is Cameron Lake located about half way between Parksville and Port Alberni. Water flows from lows of about 1600 L/s in August to an average 16000 L/s from November to March. There are no dams to control the flow so the river makes large fluctuations in level as the winter storms pass through.

Fish populations include resident rainbow and cutthroat as well as sea run cutthroat (rumour has it that the occasional brown trout drops into the lower river from Cameron Lake from time to time, but I have never talked to anyone who has caught one!) The sea run cutties are found in the river when there are abundant food supplies, including insect hatches in the warmer months, salmon eggs and dead salmon in the fall and salmon fry travelling to the ocean in early spring.

As with all Vancouver Island rivers, retention of trout is only permitted if they are hatchery marked (adipose fin clipped). There is a small population of summer and winter run steelhead but not large enough numbers that any significant fishery exists. The salmon runs are quite healthy however with Chinook coming into the river as early as May and throughout the summer. The early fish hold in deeper pools like the large pool at the E&N trestle as well as the pools below the Whiskey Creek confluence. The largest number of Chinook show up in the river starting mid September and continuing into October when spawning takes place. There can be good runs of chum starting in late September and fresh fish continue to come into the river right into November. There is a small run of coho which comes into the river from October through December.

Retention of salmon in the river is restricted to one chum and one Chinook from October 1 to November 30. In some years there has been retention of coho, but this must be checked in the fall each year. As per usual for B.C. fishing regulations, there are a wealth of **angling restrictions** with hard to understand explanations!

- No tributaries are ever open for fishing.
- From the estuary to the boundary sign 30 m below the hatchery is open year round.
- Above the hatchery fence is open from June 1 to November 30.
- From September 1 to November 30 is fly fishing only. That means no floats or indicators, no weights on the line (a sink tip may be used however) and no use of trout bead setups.
- Legally, you need a steelhead conservation stamp if fishing for steelhead, even if it is a catch and release fishery.

### Flies to use

**Trout**—match the hatch! Egg patterns, fry patterns, flesh flies, insect nymphs, emergers and dry flies will work at various times. There are stone fly, mayfly and caddis hatches on the river.

**Chinook** – small sparse flies in with oranges or red colour.(e.g. California Neal with red body, orange grizzly hackle)

**Chum**—small sparse flies in green and blue, or blue and purple. Sometimes pink works as well.

**Coho**—small sparse flies in orange and red, green and blue or other variations of small streamers.