

Muddling Along October 25

Andrew and I made our second of what we hope will become an annual trip to pursue the salmon up the coast. We departed Nanaimo Oct 20 in the morning and spent the better part of 4 days pursuing coho and chum in the Quinsam, Campbell and Little Qualicum. We had less than stellar success on the coho pursuit, hooking up on about 5 or 6 coho in the 4 days and only landing one jack which made a good supper one night. We did better on the chum, catching a few bright fish in the Campbell and lots of more "mature" fish. On Thursday and Friday morning, we fished the little Q and had great success with lots of bright chums on the Thursday and a few less on Friday morning.



A fine fall day on our favourite pool on the Little Q. Fish were holding in the deeper water along the riprap.

The highlight of the trip was watching the Danish method of catching and landing chum salmon on the Campbell. 4 gentlemen from Denmark were stretched out on the run below the bottom highway bridge using 14 foot spey rods and skagit lines. They would hook up on a chum (usually foul hooked) and hang on for dear life until the fish swung down below them in the heavy current about 100 feet away. They would wade back into the shallows, drop their rods in the water and hand line the fish up to them where they could release them. I imagine they were using at least 25# tippets to be able to handle fish in the low to mid teens off the rod. Many of the fishers (including some who were not using the "Danish" method!) were using a fly that was a sparse fly with everything tied in at the head on a number 6 black streamer hook with a thin purple rabbit strip overlaid by bright blue flashabou. Very simple.



Danish method on the Campbell below the northbound highway bridge.

Rumours among the fishermen we talked to said the Conuma has been a disaster for coho with only beat up Chinook and chum in the river. The Gold has only coloured coho—no chromers in recently. The Nimpkish had a few chrome coho, but most were coloured as well. One fisher on the Quinsam told us that his buddy had been doing well on the fly out in the chuck close to the mouth of the Campbell and had been catching “Northerns”. I assume they would be going to come into the Campbell system at some point, but they also could be heading for the Big Q or for the lower Fraser River tributaries.

On a positive note, there are stories of large numbers of chum holding off the mouth of the Nanaimo, so that, combined with the excellent returns on the early chum suggest we should have some good fishing on the Nanaimo over the next few weeks.



A fine buck in the mid teens from the little Q. Note the colour of the flesh—almost pink enough for a coho!