

Eve River- Observations, Stories and Thoughts

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TIDES

I like a low tide first thing in the morning. As pinks tend to enter the river on a rising tide this will give you a full morning of fresh fish. It may also allow for a late afternoon / early evening fishery as well. Many people start at the river mouth and fish up stream with the rising tide.

For Eve river tides just click onto the Port Neville tide table as it is right across the strait from the Eve.

PINK RETURNS

The largest number of pinks, like most of north Island rivers, tend to return on the even numbered years. As a rule these fish tend to be smaller than the pinks from the odd numbered years. Conversely there are fewer pinks returning during the odd numbered years but they tend to be bigger.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE EVEN / ODD RULE

In 2007, 186,000 pinks returned, this was 3 times the number,(61,500), that came back in 2006. Also from 1956 to 1966, the odd years had much larger returns than during the even years. Some of these odd years were anywhere from 2 to 5 times larger.

As 2016 had such an exceptionally low return does this mean we will see another multi-year reversal of the even / odd rule ?

RUN TIMING

During the even years (the "big" years) the pinks start appearing in good numbers around the end of the first week of July. It also means that by about the middle of August many are quite "coloured" and not fit to keep.

During the odd years (the "off" years) the pinks don't usually start appearing in good numbers until the end of July or even towards the end of the first week in August. On the other hand during the "odd" years I've taken plenty of bright fish into the first week of September and one old member reported taking clean fish as late as the 15th of September.

FLY COLOUR

In the "olden days" it was "PINK for PINKS". In the past 10 to 15 years it has been pink, pink with purple, just purple, olive, chartreuse , green, green and blue, green and white, and even black with a red tail. Generally it is pink for the first couple of weeks then after that it's a coin flip. If there are lots of fish visible, the best bet is to start with something pink and be prepared to change colour about every 15 minutes until you find what they want on that day. Also even when you have found what they want be aware that within a couple of hours they may want something else.

FLY SIZE

When I first started fly fishing for pinks I would use a size 1 or 2 hook because they were SALMON and salmon required BIG hooks. Over time I've found that my BIG hook is now a 6 and my usual hook is an 8.

OTHER SPECIES

The Eve is home to all five species of pacific salmon, two species of trout (plus an occasional foreigner) and one char species .

COHO

In the "olden days" (50's) the coho returns varied from a low of 750 to a high of 7,500. The extensive logging during the 70's and 80's had a very dramatic effect on their numbers, dropping them from NONE to just over one hundred in 1997. However, with the re-growth of the forest, starting in 1998 their numbers have steadily improved to a high of 5,500 in 2009. Traditionally the second to third week of September is the time for coho on the Eve. However I've caught them as early as the 5th August.

CHINOOK

The Eve never was a huge Chinook river. From '53 to '66 the returns were usually around 400 to a high of 750 in 1959. Like the coho, the logging in the '70's and '80's really affected their numbers which dropped to between none and to just 20 by 1989.

Since 2000 there has been a bit of a comeback but the numbers are still low, averaging only about 150. Although it is legal to retain Chinook in the tidal zone I don't think their numbers justify it.

CHUM

From '53 to '67 chum returns ranged from several hundred to a high of 3,500. For the past 20 plus years chum returns have been none, to a high of 141 in '07 and down to just 5 in 2014.

SOCKEYE

The Eve hasn't been much of a sockeye river. Ever since 1953 when records were first kept on this system, the highest return has only been a couple of hundred. Now it's only just a hand full.

CUTTHROAT TROUT

Since 1974 I've only caught one cuttie and have heard stories of perhaps a half dozen more.

STEELHEAD

The Eve reportedly has both a winter and a summer run. The winter fishery is reported to be best from mid March to mid April while summer fish have been reportedly caught during the pink season (August). As steelhead has similar requirements as coho I would suspect that their numbers have also been increasing since 2000.

BROWN TROUT

When the highway was pushed north from Sayward, the banks of the upper Adam were stripped. As a consequence the summer river temperatures rose. Because brown trout can stand a higher water temperature than rainbows and cutties, M.O.E. transplanted browns into it. About 20 years ago I started hearing stories of the odd sea run brown being caught in the Eve estuary. The theory being that during the winter high water some of the Adam browns were swept over the falls near where the Adam joins the Eve. As fish can't get back up these falls, the browns then became sea runners. The largest sea run brown story was about a 4 & 1/2 pounder. I haven't heard of any for at least the past 10 years.

M.O.E. stocked browns in the upper Adam for only a few years and whether or not any browns still survive there is unknown. If they do, because of the limited feed I would suspect they would be quite small.

DOLLY VARDEN CHAR

The Eve, like a number of north Island Rivers, is a great dolly river. In the olden days we would catch pinks on the rising tide then when the tide was high we would target dollies off the grassy bank area. The best set up was a cork float, a small treble hook and a pinch of pink roe. The dollies were suckers for roe and it was easy to get a half dozen fish from 1 to about 1 & 1/2 pounds. My biggest which was caught on a spoon was 3 & 1/2 pounds.

When smoked they were incredibly tasty.

Dollies, like all char, are fall spawners. In the late '80's, when I worked at the Brannen Lake jail, one of the staff had a trap line on the upper Eve. He reported that in November, he often saw pools with large dollies "stacked up like cord wood".

As dollies have been on the "non retention" list for a number of years their numbers have been increasing. I think now it would be quite interesting to find those pools come some November.

ORCAS

As the Eve empties into Johnstone strait orcas are often sited way out in the channel. However sometimes they come into the river mouth. Many years ago, while camped at the "lower village" I was awoken, at about 3 a.m. by the sound of orcas blowing at the estuary.

On another occasion, although I did not witness it, I heard a story which involved one of our old club member. Reportedly, he, not to mention any names such as Roy, was fishing at the estuary, right at the "drop off". The drop off really does drop off! You can be standing in waist deep water and with just one more step you would be stepping into 20 feet. Anyways the story has an orca surfacing right in front of our fellow and when I say right in front I mean almost touching distance. The person telling me the story said he couldn't believe that anybody in waders, in waist deep water, could run that fast if he hadn't witnessed it for himself.

My own close encounter occurred on the 10th of August 2006. It was about mid-morning and I was second from the drop off on the log sort side of the estuary. I don't recall how the fishing was but I do recall there were a lot of fish showing when with no warning a cow orca surfaces right in front of the fellow at the drop off. It was a maximum 30 feet from me, its mouth was open, I could see its tongue, every individual tooth and even some pinks trying to swim out of its mouth. My first reaction was "YIKES"! My second was an instant replay of the video about orcas throwing themselves onto the beach to attack baby seals and there I was in waist deep water wearing dark waders. The orca then dove, came up on the far side of the river, turned, dove and came up in front but farther out and then she was just gone. All during this time I had my water proof camera strapped to the front of my waders but didn't think to take a picture until the show was over.

I know that resident orcas supposedly only eat fish while the transients eat seals, but when it's right in front of you, with mouth open and you're in waist deep water sort of looking like a seal, how do they tell "them" apart?

Cheers
Basher

