

Richard's Kennedy Lake Adventures Oct 2018 (With Pictures)

Day 1

I launched around 10 AM. It was a glassy calm, sunny and warm Sunday morn at the biggest lake on Van Isle. So as you would expect the lake was very crowded. There was another boat on the water about 2 km away. That is about as crowded as it ever gets here. I don't like fishing in crowds so I headed across the lake to my campsite. Made a fire and coffee. The lake had come up about 6 feet after the first set of rains, and was now dropping quickly to about 2 ft above low water. I caught some nice cutthroats in front of my camp on homemade spinner. But I was surprised that there were no cohos, even jacks, hanging around this spot. It is usually a hotspot for cohos.

Then I went across the lake to check other spots. At Spot B, where I did so well last Oct, there were no fish at all. Shocking! I could see a school of fish swirling at Spot C. I caught a couple cohos there. They were getting dark but still fought really hard. The first one sliced off half an acre of weeds ripping around on my 10 lb line. There is no way to get these fish in to the boat quickly, and the water is very shallow, so you spook the rest of the school in the process. I caught one more nice searun cuttie, and then headed back to camp to make dinner and relax.



First fish of the trip, right out in front of my campfire.

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Cohos from Spot B.

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Tiny cutthroat, back in front of my camp site.

Day 2

I made the mistake of leaving my gopro mounted in the boat overnight, and it got soaked in dew. Had to switch to my backup Safari cam. In the process of getting set up to film again I missed the dawn bite. I was discouraged by the previous day's fishing, and thinking about shifting into mushroom hunter mode by the time I got ready to fish with the Safari cam. But I hooked and lost a big beauty searun on the first cast, so I turned the camera on and hooked and lost another on the next cast. Then actually landed a smaller one on the third cast. This one went into the ice cooler. Beautiful searun trout with bright orange meat! I didn't want to disturb this spot right in front of my campfire any more, so I left without making another cast and headed across the lake to Spot C. Caught 3 beauty searuns in a row, and saved one for the cooler. Wouldn't you know, those were the last good trout I would get into the net on the whole trip.

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Banana slug trying to eat my gopro bottle. I moved it 20 feet away, and an hour later it was back eating my eggnog carton.



Late morning cutties in front of camp. You can hear them jumping while you sip coffee around the campfire!

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Cutthroat from Spot C.

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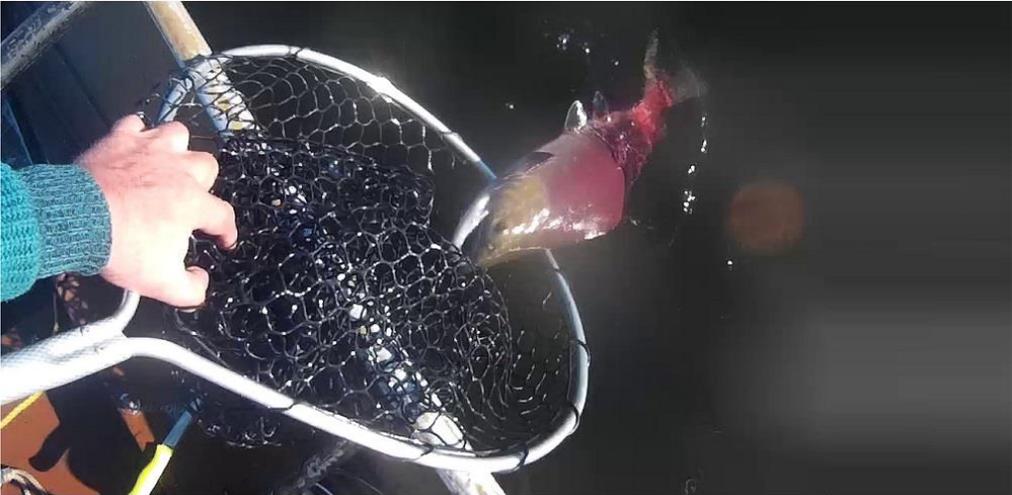
In front of me was a pack of cohos frolicking off a creek mouth. I caught a few. Again they were dark, but fought really hard. They tow my 14 ft boat around in circles, and spook every fish within 50 meters of the boat. After a while a fly fisherman came down to fish off the beach. I don't like fishing in crowds so I left and went looking for another spot. The lake was so calm you could see schools of active fish from a kilometer away. I spotted another school of active fish at Spot D and caught a few more, all dark adult cohos. There appeared to be a couple hundred fish here, and you could hardly see the bottom when the swam past. Then headed back to camp for lunch.



Sockeye caught on homemade spinner at Spot C & D.

These are the first sockeye I have ever caught in the lake in over 40 years of fishing there. They are beach-spawning sockeye that used to be so common there, now very rare. I talked to a friend from Tofino who does swim counts for DFO. Last year they could not find a single fish from this once gigantic run. So I called and talked to him last night. They knew about this school and had already done a swim survey there. Last of a dying breed.

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Silver jack coho, Spot D

In the afternoon my gopro had come back to life. I went back across to the lake to recharge camera batteries with the Volvo cigarette lighter. As I approached I saw a crowd of people around the boat launch. Turns out it was a film crew from England, shooting an episode for an idiot British TV "reality show" called Made in Chelsea. I zoomed right in to their final scene, and they had to shut down filming while I moved my boat down the beach. By the time I got the charger set up in my car they were back filming the finale, in which the star and starlet (who are fishing in the lake) pop open a bottle of champagne, and the cork pops out into the lake. They had 2 big expensive cameras filming, and fancy dual monitors under a canopy so the producer and director could watch the live video feed from the cameras. They filmed the scene twice (what does that say about the modern version of "reality"), so they popped open 2 bottles of champagne. Meanwhile I was standing right behind the director while he yelled out "Ready Set Action" (they really say that!) and the actors were in the background. I was filming the whole thing with my \$70 Safari cam for my REAL reality show.

I had great plans to head back out fishing with my fresh batteries, but the film crew were packing up and heading back to Nanaimo and Vancouver and back to London the next morn. They knew I was camping across the lake, so the director asked me if I had any use for the two bottles of champagne they had just opened? I thought about it, and said yes.

They had poured a few drinks for the camera, so I poured most of one bottle to fill the other and whittled a stopper out of cedar, guzzled the remainder of bottle 2, and headed back to my camp, still with serious intentions to go out fishing. But it was such a glorious afternoon that I lost interest in fishing, and mostly sat around my campfire sipping pagné and contemplating life. Occasionally I would get up and hack some trail with my machete towards the shroom forest, but I finally just gave up and just laid out in the sun. That champagne was not going to drink itself. By that time I had consumed more champagne in one day than I

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probably have in many years previous, and I still had half a bottle left. I realized that I had better get up off my butt if I was going to catch any more fish that day.



British TV show filming at the boat ramp.

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Busy day on the lake. I hate fishing in crowds.

The lake was like glass, so I went racing off to check another area, Spot E near the Kennedy River bridge. I noticed a ridge of rocks and boulders underwater. It appears to be human made, probably the remains of a weir that crossed the entire shallow outflow channel of the lake, used by aboriginal people to control all the fish moving into and out of the lake during low water?



Remains of ancient aboriginal weir that once spanned the channel at Spot E.

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I have usually caught trout and jack cohos there, and I have seen a few adult cohos at times. But as I crept in with my electric motor, sipping Italian champagne, I was astounded to see a couple acres of shallow mud/clay flat swarming with big cohos, rolling a swirling. It took about 1/10 of a second from the time my lure first hit the water until I was hooked into my first fish, a big silver screamer. There were probably 500+ fish milling around in clear shallow water 2-4 ft deep, and it was madness watching them go berserk while my hooked fish went crazy racing back and forth and leaping among them. There were darker fish in the schools, but the ones I was hooking were much brighter, and I caught a couple bright chromers fresh from the ocean. It was a spectacular sunset. I was the only human within sight or sound guzzling free Italian champagne with one hand and fighting huge chromer salmon with the other. The scenery is breathtaking, the fishing is OK, and they give you bottles of free champagne. I can't understand why nobody else ever fishes here?



The film crew gave me 2 bottles of champagne, which I did not want to waste.



One bottle down, half a bottle left. Time to go fishing!

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Casting to an active school. Odds of getting a bite...



... pretty good!

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Less than one second after my first cast hit the water at Spot E. This one got off after a maniac scrap that spooked zillions of other fish. The whole area is about a meter deep or less. The ripples are from other cohos freaking out as their cohort goes airborne

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Another coho. This one got off at the net. The perils of single barbless.

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Multitasking. Champagne in one hand, coho in the other. Life is good! I don't know why nobody else fishes here. The scenery is stupendous, the fishing is OK, and they give you free champagne.



Another coho, and a toast to wild salmon.

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Lunker coho.

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By the time I got back to camp I was 3 sheets to the wind, and I still needed to go across to my car to retrieve the batteries charging in my car, and come back across the biggest lake on the island in the dark and severely intoxicated. That is the way some people die, so I decided to cancel that plan and remain around my campfire and have dinner.

Day 3

I went across to the boat launch at dawn, where I found my car battery run dead cuz the charger had been running all night. I had to pack my boat battery up to the car to jumpstart the car, and then get another set of camera batteries charging. That meant I had missed the dawn bite. Again. I went back to camp and spent an hour setting up my flyrod. Then went out and got the leader in a big tangle after a few casts and said the H with flyfishing. I switched from fishing to trying to film underwater. I still have not had time to look at any of the video I shot on the trip. It is always interesting to look at the underwater stuff.

I made some casts while the camera was filming underwater. There were fish around the same spots as the day before, but nowhere else, and they would not bite. So I went back to camp, had lunch, and headed off to Spot E where I had run into so many fish the night before. They were still holding on the exact same area, but on this day under bright sun they would not bite, just make mad bullrushes and boiling swirls at the spinner, but almost never actually biting. Still it was very exiting to see these big fish charging at my lure in 2 ft deep water!

The fish were really jittery, and for good reason. Out in the middle of the channel there were sea lions (or maybe seals) riding herd on the cohos, keeping them corralled in the shallows, picking off strays, and occasionally making underwater charges into the schools. Just as my camera batteries were running out I was able to actually film sea lion attacks in the lake for the first time ever. I also tossed a spinner in again and caught a huge coho, still fairly silver. I was surprised that it did not fight as hard as the others until I got it to the net. The bottom half of the tail had been bitten off by a sea lion, and there was a big gash where a tooth had bitten into the flesh under the tail. Yikes! Maybe not a good place to take small children swimming?

I had serious issues with batteries and charging video storage on this trip. I spent too much time getting ready to film, and very little time fishing. So when I ran out of batteries again I shut down fishing and just lazied my way back, exploring a shore I seldom visit. This is the most incredible stretch of October weather EVER at Kennedy Lake. I spent an hour just laying on a warm rockface like a lizard in the sun, getting a suntan. There was not a ripple on the whole lake. It was too nice to fish.

Then I loaded up my camp and headed back across to the boat ramp and back home. On the way I made some casts around creek mouths on the highway shore, and lost the biggest cuttie of the trip in midair, just above the net.

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Spot E again. These fish are VERY shallow. Just waving my hand in front of the lens spooks the school in the distance.

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Sea lions ripping thru a school of cohos. They were not practicing catch & release, so I reported them



Big coho with rear end damage due to sea lion attack.

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Loading out.

Synopsis

I did not get to fish much, but I caught few nice fish. There were not a lot of trout around, but there were a few searuns - unlike this summer when I went there with Bruce and we only caught smaller resident cutties. There are lots of cohos in the lake, but they seem to be tightly packed in a few big schools in shallow water, afraid to move around because of seals and sea lions. This stretch of balmy late summer weather is unprecedented, and it is supposed to continue. I am curious to see what is happening there under these rare "Indian summer" conditions, and it is such a huge lake that I was only able to explore a fraction of it in the time I was there. So if I get my act together I might go back.

I stopped at the provincial campsite at Clayoquat Arm bridge. It is still open to camping, but you can no longer drive a vehicle there. Due to drunken yahoos trashing the place the natives dug a ditch across the road, so "Redneck Beach" is no more. The last place where you could drive a vehicle onto the beach at Kennedy and camp overnight is history. However, you can just pull over and park for the night anywhere along the logging road. Two vehicles were camped overnight at the boat launch when I got there at dawn, but it is against the rules, and you would probably get booted out if you parked there with a camper.

I shot lots of video that I am now downloading and storing to hard drive. When I do the archiving I review what I shot and save some screencaps, and then send some images to elaborate on this text if anyone is interested.

Richard

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sockeye



sockeye & jack coho

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