

Our 40th Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

Columbia River Dinosaurs

Sometimes known as the poor man's marlin, or more commonly "gators" by local anglers, the white sturgeon is a species that deserves more respect. After the turn of the last century, when commercial salmon gill netting was at its peak, sturgeon were thought of as a nuisance and the netters hacked them from their nets with machet-ties. Sturgeon were consid-ered third class citizens and the only good sturgeon was a dead sturgeon. Thankfully, more reasonable minds prevailed and the sturgeon

GONE FISHING
by
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began to get some of the respect it so duly deserved. But that probably didn't happen till someone tried to catch one on a rod and reel. If you haven't fished for sturgeon on the lower Columbia river, you'll never know what you are missing. But if you get the chance and get into some fish, you'll likely go back again



Three sturgeon on at once!
Photo courtesy of Dan Ponicano Guide Service

for more. The white sturgeon is one of the most under-rated sport fish in the world in my book. During the peak of the season when water temps are in the upper 50's to mid 60's, it's hard to discount the sturgeon as anything less than the hardest fighting fish in freshwater. When you couple that with a fish that is four to eight

feet in length, you have a battle royale on your hands. The Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife estimates that there are 400,000 white sturgeon in the lower Columbia between the Mouth and Bonneville dam. That's roughly 100

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Pardee Lake Kokanee Return to Form

After an almost three-month break from the boat due to outboard and downrigger issues, I finally hit the water on May 30 to test out the repairs. What better place to refresh my fishing skills than Pardee Lake? I've had many great trips to Pardee over the years. It features a special daily bag limit of ten kokanee per angler instead of the usual five. There have been some ups and downs in kokanee populations due to drought conditions in recent years, but this year the kokanee population has returned to form. The average size fish is currently ranging between eleven and twelve inches, so break out the light gear and head up the hills for limits! On May 30, my kids Grace and Adam were fresh out of school on summer break. The three of us piled into the truck and got an early start on our trip. We pulled into the Pardee Recreation Area at just about 5:30 am in low-light conditions. As we motored north towards the ramp, a noisy turkey suddenly gobbled, and

two deer grazed to our right as we cautiously rolled by. Once on the water, we made our way up the river arm and had four lines in the water in no time flat. The downrigger rod at 30 feet immediately started shaking. "Fish!" I called out to Adam, and he gingerly made his way to the rod in a half-woke state. The kokanee danced on the surface as I swiped the net to secure our first fish of the day. "CAW-CLICK" my fish counter rang out, and displayed '001'. The fish was bled by cutting the gills and placed into an ice-water bath in the cooler. The next two fish came off, and I told the kids, "We need thirty, and then we'll grill hot dogs". The plan



WHAT'S HOT
by
Jack Naves



The author's cleaning board prior to the filleting process. These 11 to 12 inch kokanee and larger trout hit small custom spinners trolled between 26 and 38 feet deep at Pardee Lake on May 30. The kokanee will continue to grow bigger and push deeper as the summer progresses.
Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

was to run four downriggers and two topline rods with my Sunfran Smart

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What We're Using

Ernie Marlan - planned to fish the Channel Islands for white seabass but the wind did not cooperate and the trip was canceled. Live squid is often the preferred bait and Ernie's rod of choice for this technique is C4 Custom with a line rating of 15-30 teamed up with a Okuma Tesoro 10S spooled with 50lb FINS Braid and a 25lb GAMMA fluorocarbon leader.

Paul Kneeland - fished Jackson Meadows Reservoir with Brian Garcia of Alta in The Fish Sniffer Rogue Jet Coastal 21. They caught rainbow and cutthroat trout to 20 inches and 3 pounds using a 7' Powell composite kokanee rod with a Shimano Calcutta 100 level wind reel loaded with 8 pound Yozuri Hybrid line. They trolled firetiger Needlefish and watermelon Speedy Shiners 10 to 40 feet deep off the Cannon Downriggers at 2.2 mph.

Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Lake Alpine. He used a Berkley Ugly Stik GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 6 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with rainbow glitter Berkley PowerBait and nightcrawlers on sliding sinker rigs with Size #4 and #6 Gamakatsu baitholder hooks.

GONE FISHING

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miles of river. Both the Washington and Oregon game departments allow



Grant Winn and Dan Ponciano show off one of 23 sturgeon landed in Astoria Oregon.

Photo Courtesy of Dan Ponciano Guide Service

for a handful of catch and retain dates in late May and early June, but the remainder of the year is wide open to catch and release. June and July offer blue ribbon fishing in the Columbia river estuary. One of the best things about this fishery is that actively feeding sturgeon are most often found (and caught) in 20 feet of water or less. On incoming tides it's not uncommon for anglers to find them in three feet of water. This means relatively light tackle can be used so these sturgeon peel lots of line and frequently clear the water, bringing whoops and hollers from excited anglers. During the peak season, it's not uncommon for guides and charters to boat 15-30 fish a day ranging from 4-7ft long....and regulars have seen their share of 8 and even 9 ft fish.

Some years, when good runs are predicted, the Columbia river also remains open to summer salmon and steelhead fishing and combo trips are a very real possibility.

The small city of Astoria, on the Oregon shore is nine miles upriver from the Pacific. Astoria and its surrounding area offer tourists a bounty of activities, from fishing,



Sunrise Astoria Oregon bridge.

Photo Courtesy of Dan Ponciano Guide Service

crabbing, top notch razor clamming, beachcombing, hiking, biking and much, much more. The city itself offers plenty of hotels to match any budget. There are great restaurants, award winning local breweries, distilleries, pubs, shopping, theaters, museums and more NW culture than one might expect.

Lower Columbia Sturgeon Guides:

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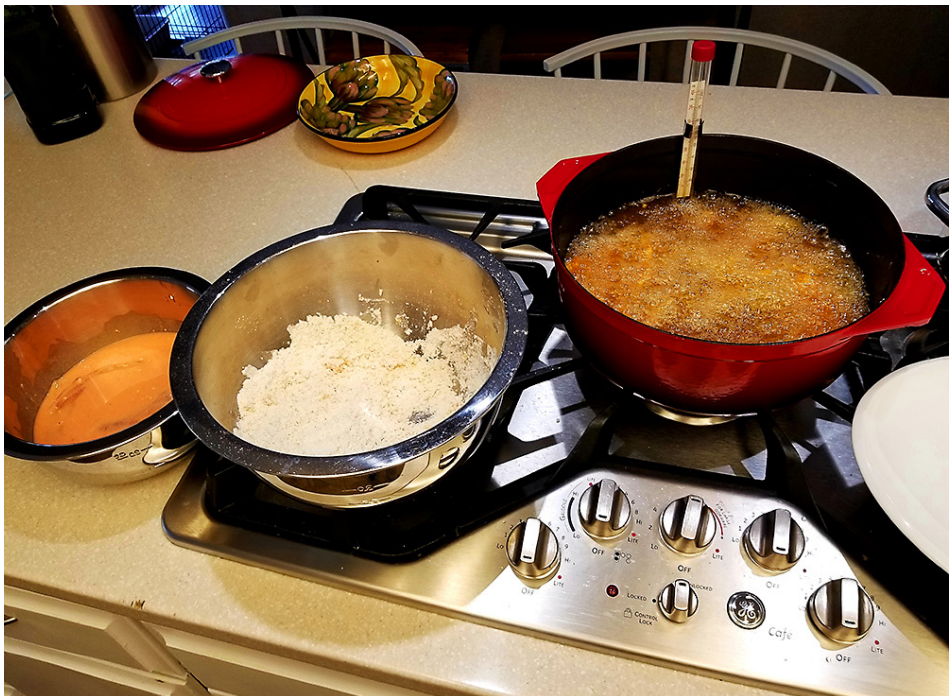
WHAT'S HOT

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Red-orange kokanee fillets like these will produce mouth-watering results whether they are fried, grilled, or smoked. Be sure to bleed and ice your catch immediately after netting in order to keep the quality as fresh as possible.

Photo courtesy of Jack Naves



This assembly line of Sriracha-buttermilk marinated fillets, seasoned breading, and hot oil leads to a 'chicken fingers' type of result with small kokanee fillets. Dipped in Chick-fil-A Sauce or honey mustard, this recipe is a hit with adults and kids alike.

Photo courtesy of Jack Naves

Jigger rod holders. The action was so fast that we couldn't get four downrigger lines into the water without hooking up. We finally had a break in the action so I started letting one of the topline rods out to 150 feet back.

I only had 50 feet of line out when one of the downrigger rods hooked up. I set my rod down to net Adam's fish, when suddenly the starboard downrigger rod also hooked up. "Grace, fish!" I called, and now both kids were fighting feisty silver rockets. With the net in hand, I glanced up at my topline rod...it was doubled over on another fish! I let it run, and prepared to net Adam's fish,

when the final two downrigger rods started bouncing in their rod holders.

All five rods were hooked up, and Adam's was the first to come in. After netting it, I quickly handed the net to Adam and started reeling in my topline rod. Adam netted Grace's fish, and somehow we used a combination of netting and tuna-boat techniques to get all five of the kokanee into the boat.

The action finally slowed down, but we were able to get the fish counter to read '030' by about 11:00 am. We finished up by trolling for trout near the ramp area while grilling hot dogs for lunch. It was a mellow cap to a

fast-paced morning on the water.

Catching small kokanee is similar to catching a mess of crappie. The fillets add up, and before you know it, you have a fish fry on your hands. The good thing about kokanee under twelve inches is that you don't need to remove the pin bones, as they will soften up with most cooking techniques.

One of my favorite ways to prepare small kokanee fillets is breaded and fried. Pretty much anything is good deep-fried, but when my kids are asking for seconds during fish dinners, I know I've done something right. Here is a rundown of how I

prepare small kokanee.

First, fillet and skin each kokanee. Next, marinate the fillets in a zip lock freezer bag for at least an hour, but up to one or two days. I keep the sealed bag on a bowl of ice in the refrigerator to keep the fish as fresh as possible. The marinade is a 4:1 buttermilk to Sriracha mixture. For one pound of fillets, it would be 1-cup of buttermilk and ¼-cup of Sriracha.

The Sriracha adds a nice flavoring to the fish without making it spicy. Next, mix your breading by combining 2-cups flour, 2-cups panko breadcrumbs, 2-teaspoons paprika, 1-teaspoon salt, ½-teaspoon black pepper, and 1-teaspoon seasoning salt.

Add about three inches of cooking oil to a Dutch oven or saucepan and heat to 360 degrees. Having a clip-on thermometer to keep an eye on the oil temperature is a plus.

Drag the marinated fillets in your breading, then drop them in batches into your hot oil until golden brown. These small fillets will only take about three to five minutes to cook. Take them out of the oil, salt, and enjoy with a dipping sauce like Chick-fil-A Sauce or honey mustard. In a pinch, I will make a homemade dipping sauce by combining ½-cup mayonnaise, ¼-cup honey, ¼-cup barbecue sauce, 2-tablespoons yellow mustard, 1-tablespoon Dijon mustard, and one 1-tablespoon lemon juice.

Be sure to plan at least one trip up to Pardee Lake this year, and follow it up with a fish fry. Your crispy golden fillets will have people coming back for seconds.