

Outdoors with Alec Merriman

Sooke River Showing Growth in Spawning

I stood on a rocky ledge overlooking the big sandpool at the start of the first Sooke potholes and, in company with federal fish guardian Jack Brooks, watched a man and his girl friend cast their lines among 15 or 20 spawning 30 and 40-pound spring salmon. All the salmon were black, some showed those white patches which indicate advanced stages of spawning. We watched the man retrieve his cast and what he pulled out of the water was a shock to me.

are mostly all heavyweights in the 30 and 40-pound class. He took fisheries Inspector Harry Grainger on a tour of the river, as he had done with us the week before, and they saw the spawning springs building up day by day in what appears to be heading for a bumper spawning escapement year.

The next day the whole Sooke River from the mouth to the potholes was closed to

salmon angling until further notice. The Sooke River is the particular baby of guardian Brooks. In 1953 he saw a female and three jacksprings on the spawning beds. There had been no records of spawning springs in the Sooke, although there may have been a few, as fisheries doesn't count records until there are 50.

In 1955 the spawning escapement of springs

reached 150. In 1956 it dropped to nil again and in 1957 it was back up to 50. Guardian Brooks made it his personal campaign to protect and build up that escapement. In 1958 he counted 300 spawners, and then there was a steady climb. In 1963 there were 1,500 spawners in the river. Then in 1965 a disappointment. It dropped to 300. Last year it was up to 1,100 spring spawners. This fall the returns are

from the 1965 cycle year when the escapement was a disappointing 300, but there is every indication this year's escapement may be the best yet.

Floods and scouring by logging slash have been big problems for the spawning spring salmon, even more of a problem than the jiggers who use the treble hooks to get the spring salmon which are really not much good for

eating at that stage of their development. At the sandpool in the Sooke where we watched the spawners preparing their redds, we saw the evidence of past floods in the logs and slash along the shoreline. This is the time of year to watch the salmon on their spawning runs to the rivers. Best time at the Goldstream will be the Remembrance Day (Nov. 10-11) weekend. You could be disappointed on earlier trips although you should see some. No fishing is allowed in the Goldstream at this time. While the spawning runs are really something to see and quite educational, the numbers of people who turn out to watch them are a problem to fisheries guardians. No molesting is allowed.

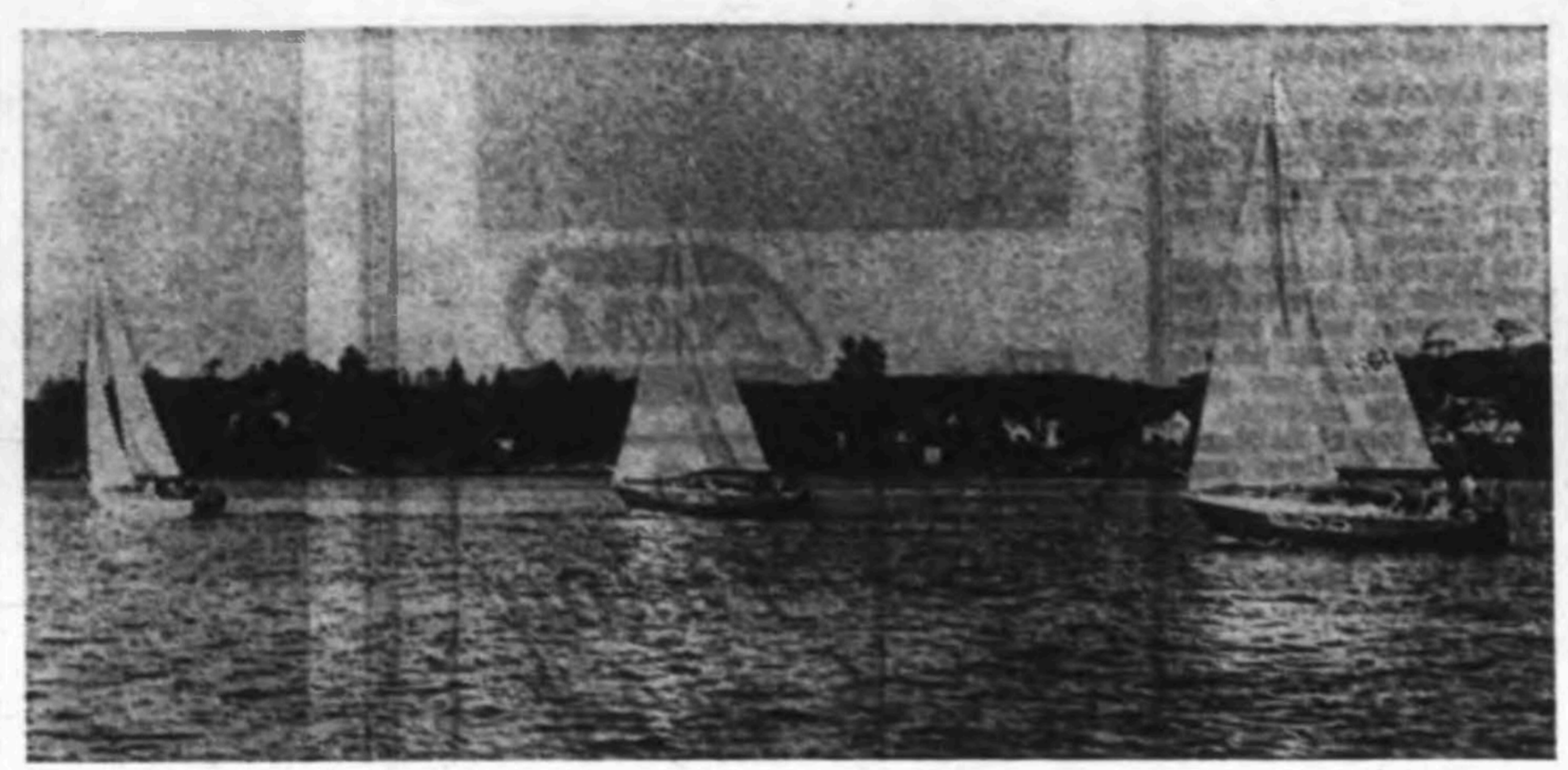
of this off-year (even-year) pink salmon run may be the answer.

If Botanical Beach at Port Renfrew is ever going to be preserved for the public as parkland, Recreation Minister Kenneth Keirnan had better act now. Some three or four years ago when logging operations shut off Botanical Beach to the public, there was quite a furor. Recreation Minister Kiernan ducked out of a fish and wildlife federation convention at Nanaimo to return to Victoria where he met with Rudolph Wischi, head of the offending logging company.

reserve on the foreshore containing the rest of the reef. The plan for a park which Kiernan so loudly announced to hush up the public outcry never materialized.

Now the 571 acres and 10,500 feet of waterfront which form the Botanical Beach property are up for sale for \$160,000. The parks branch certainly doesn't need all of it, but it certainly should move now to secure some of it. A camping area and a nature park with naturalists, similar to that on Mittenatch Island, would seem to be the ideal development. There are features that would suggest the area was an ideal spot for the University of Victoria marine station, or at least an offshoot study area for the mooted university marine centre. I understand B.C. Forest Products is interested in part of the area as a tree farm.

He had a big treble hook on the end of his line, almost as big as the hooks used on cod jigs. Flush with the eye of the hook (not even a foot or so up the line) he had a big rubber-core weight. There was no bait on his hooks. He was using 25-pound-test line. When guardian Brooks asked him what he was doing he said he was fishing for steelhead. Guardian Brooks told him they were spawning spring salmon he was casting amongst, and added that steelhead don't come into the Sooke at this time of year... Christmas week is the time to fish the Sooke for steelhead.



Three Haida-class yachts in line during weekend race

—Erith Smith

"Oh I see the salmon. I know a salmon from a steelhead," retorted the angler. "Those black ones are steelhead. The salmon are the ones with the white patches," he added.

Some Like It Wet

At this time Brooks identified himself as the fisheries guardian and set the angler straight on his fish identification. They were all salmon. We showed him how he could use a lighter test line, a small hook, bait it with salmon paste (which he had in his car) to represent a single salmon egg, put a little weight a foot or 18 inches up the leader and roll the bait along the bottom to fish for the trout which lie behind the salmon to feed on the eggs that wash downstream.

Start Try Beats the Gun

By ERITH M. SMITH

The angler thanked us and went back to his fishing. I wondered why guardian Brooks hadn't pinched him for molesting the spring salmon, because although it is legal to fish with proper lures for coho or spring salmon in any river that is not specifically closed for protection of salmon, it is

There are few things prettier to watch than a yacht race — and few that offer more fun and challenge to the participants. All the old sailing hands (of all ages) know this, of course, but these articles are aimed at the others, also of all ages, who watch from the shore and wonder if they could ever take part. Well, they can. Sailing lessons are available, and while it would be great to be able to own your own sailboat of whatever size or type, it's not necessary. More and more people do own boats, and there's a steady call for crew to help in regattas and weekend races.

as race spectators to sail, we set a starting line from a marker buoy in the bay to shore, and set to. We took turn about as skipper and, since we were alone, Tony threw at us some of the complications we'd encounter in a real event. Using a stopwatch, we timed a run from the starting line to a point fairly well behind it, through a quick turn and back to the line. This would be the skipper's guide for his own run at the start. Doing rapid mental calculations, and with one of the crew designated time-keeper, the skipper sent us away from the line, turned, and headed back. With

jaw firmly set, I took the helm and started my preliminary run back from the line, getting the word from the time-keeper. Mental processes whirling in their customary mathematical fog, I was about to call the turn back to the starting line when Tony informed me there were two boats on either side of me, just astern. As skipper, I had to decide what to do. Turned out in a case like that there's nothing you can do until one or other of the following boats makes its turn, then come about as quickly as possible on that same side. This development of course had

Stoney Creek in the Saseenos area of Sooke is one spot which causes trouble for guardian Brooks. It is the otum (or dogs) that run up this river and no fishing of these is allowed, except by Indians at certain times under permit. But for some reason people seem to persist on molesting the fish in Stoney Creek. One morning guardian Brooks found 17 fish gaffed and left along the banks of the creek. Some were still breathing on the shore. We also had a look at the pink (bumpback) salmon which are spawning in Jordan River. This year the return is disappointing. Only about 500 pinks returned to the river and these are much smaller fish than usual. Usual spawning escapement is about 2,500. Problem may have been a breakdown in the B.C. Hydro flume at the critical time, which saw a lack of water in the tail race where the salmon spawn.

He emerged from that meeting and loudly proclaimed the problem was settled. Wischi would donate part of the area as a public park after he had finished logging. Then Wischi got permission to blast part of the reef, which had the inter-tidal pools where the unusual marine life was the big attraction of the area, so as to make a log booming bay. He blasted the reef, but the plan to boom logs there wasn't successful. The parks branch put a

A syndicate of 50 people investing \$10,000 each could purchase all the waterfront area, if the other part could be sold as a tree farm area. The parks branch must get in its bid before this property is lost to the public.

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Which Company's Debiture Holders Are Currently Sharing Profits From Sprock?

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We showed him how he could use a lighter test line, a small hook, bait it with salmon paste (which he had in his car) to represent a single salmon egg, put a little weight a foot or 18 inches up the leader and roll the bait along the bottom to fish for the trout which lie behind the salmon to feed on the eggs that wash downstream.

★ ★ ★

The angler thanked us and went back to his fishing.

I wondered why guardian Brooks hadn't pinched him for molesting the spring salmon, because although it is legal to fish with proper lures for coho or spring salmon in any river that is not specifically closed for protection of salmon, it is strictly illegal to jig for salmon . . . and to my thinking there was no doubt this angler was jigging for these salmon.

A couple of days later guardian Brooks was again patrolling the Sooke River, and lo and behold, who should be in the same spot casting with his weighted treble hook, but that same angler.

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Brooks found two or three other anglers molesting the spawning spring salmon, and this time he made some pinches.

That was enough for guardian Brooks who has nursed the spring salmon in the Sooke River until now it produces a sizable run of spring salmon . . . and they

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All the old sailing hands (of all ages) know this, of course, but these articles are aimed at the others, also of all ages, who watch from the shore and wonder if they could ever take part.

Well, they can. Sailing lessons are available, and while it would be great to be able to own your own sailboat of whatever size or type, it's not necessary. More and more people do own boats, and there's a steady call for crew to help in regattas and weekend races.

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Racing in Greater Victoria waters is not just a summertime thing. True, many boats are put up for the winter, but many remain active with organized races at regular intervals.

Racing, naturally, is just one of the things that sailing's all about, and that's what instructor Tony Burton out of Oak Bay Yachts is teaching our particular class—Art, Malcolm, Peter and me.

Last time out we followed one of the races in Oak Bay waters, then practised starts ourselves.

Switching from the power we'd used

as race spectators to sail, we set a starting line from a marker buoy in the bay to shore, and set to. We took turn about as skipper and, since we were alone, Tony threw at us some of the complications we'd encounter in a real event.

Using a stopwatch, we timed a run from the starting line to a point fairly well behind it, through a quick turn and back to the line. This would be the skipper's guide for his own run at the start.

★ ★ ★

Doing rapid mental calculations, and with one of the crew designated timekeeper, the skipper sent us away from the line, turned, and headed back. With one minute left of the estimated time required, the timekeeper began calling out five-second intervals.

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The others did pretty well. For them the starting gun sounded anywhere from about 15 down to five seconds before we hit the line. Tony kindly pointed out that in the former case only about 20 opponents would have been across the line ahead of us; in the latter case, perhaps half a dozen. Not bad, he said, for a first try.

Then it was my turn. Teeth gritted,

jaw firmly set, I took the helm and started my preliminary run back from the line, getting the word from the timekeeper.

Mental processes whirling in their customary mathematical fog, I was about to call the turn back to the starting line when Tony informed me there were two boats on either side of me, just astern. As skipper, I had to decide what to do.

★ ★ ★

Turned out in a case like that there's nothing you can do until one or other of the following boats makes its turn, then come about as quickly as possible on that same side.

This development, of course, had thrown my mental arithmetic completely out of whack. Determined, however, to hit that starting line a split second only before the gun, I tried to keep our Haida, Raven, running at full speed in the day's fair wind.

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In one sense, I was successful. We did maintain speed.

When countdown to the starting gun began, it went like this: ". . . 25 . . . 20 . . . 15 . . . 10 . . . BANG . . . 5 . . ."

I was over too soon, and had to come about and do it all over again.

which are spawning in the River. This year the return is disappointing. Only about 500 pinks returned to the river and these are much smaller fish than usual. Usual spawning escapement is about 2,500. Problem may have been a breakdown in the B.C. Hydro flume at the critical time, which saw a lack of water in the tail race where the salmon spawn.

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What will happen to this pink salmon run when the B.C. Hydro expansion at Jordan River goes ahead and the tail race is abandoned at the spawning beds is a matter of serious concern. Probably construction of a spawning channel to ensure continuation

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