

**ALASKA**

April 6-20, 2000

# Fishing & Hunting NEWS™

## Spring's Best BITES!



Ship Creek kings  
Campbell Creek trout

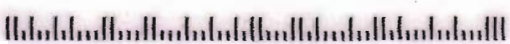
**SALTWATER**  
Turnagain hooligan  
Ninilchik kings  
Homer halibut

**HUNTING & SHOOTING**  
Unit 13 bear

**TRAVEL MAP**  
**NORTH GULF**  
**COAST FLY**  
**FISHING**

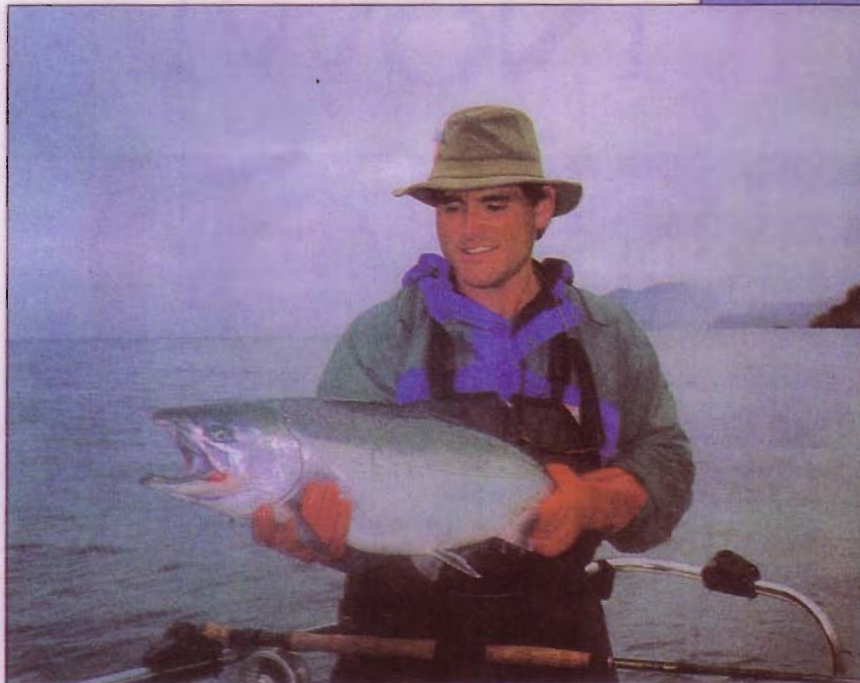


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## SEWARD

# North Gulf Coast fly fishing



**BOTH OF THESE** Alaskan salmon were taken on the fly. (Photos courtesy of Tony Weaver)

by Capt. Andy Mezirow  
F&H News columnist

**S**ome fishermen are always looking for something new. If you're one of them, try saltwater fly fishing in southcentral Alaska. Its most important requirement is willingness to pursue a variety of species. If the conditions are wrong for salmon, switch gears and pursue black rockfish and lingcod. If the tides are slow, try fishing for halibut. The flexibility of the fisherman, depending on conditions, is critical to success when out on a fly fishing trip.

**TACKLE FOR HALIBUT:** There is no room for light tackle when fly fishing for halibut. Spool up your heavy-duty fly reel with 65-pound Tuff Line Plus backing, attach that to an 80- to 90-foot high-visibility level floating line as an indicator, attach that to a 30-foot, 50-grain sink tip like the Scientific Angler "Deep Water Express." You will want a 2- to 3-foot section of 40-pound monofilament

leader attached to a 12-inch trace of 45-pound flexible wire. The indicator line keeps the sink tip from getting tangled.

You will want a rod that has the power to lift a big fish off of the bottom. Master fly fisherman Tony Weaver recommends nothing less than the stout G.Loomis, Nautikos 14/15 - 3 mega or the G.Loomis GLXfr10212/13-3 Mega Taper. These rods have the backbone to move a big fish in the right direction.

What type of fly would work for the pacific halibut? Well, the flies I have seen used for halibut are basically large flesh flies, 4 to 8 inches long. They are tied to a 5/0 Owner octopus hook. The Owner hooks are chemically sharpened and come razor sharp out of the package. One homemade fly for halibut I have seen work is a bunch of long strips of rabbit fur with a large epoxy head. This fly resembles an octopus or squid.

**THE TECHNIQUE:** The casting part of fly fishing for halibut is not a thing of beauty. The main idea is to get the fly to the bottom as quickly as possible.

According to halibut fly fishing pioneer Jimi Carlsen of Jimi Sea Charters in Seward (907-224-4446), the captain holds the boat into the current and has the anglers strip out enough line to get them to the bottom. Fishing is best done in 40 to 90 feet of water. The captain takes his boat out of gear and allows the boat to drift downcurrent while the fly lines sink. By the time the lines are near the bottom, the boat has drifted over the lines. The time an angler's fly is on the bottom may only be a few minutes. Once the fly is off the bottom, it is time to make another drift. Jimi believes that it is essential to have a fly that can sink fast to imitate the erratic motion of a scampi jig or panicked baitfish.

Although purists may shy away from this technique, I have found chumming heavily in an area before dropping a fly can increase your chances for catching a halibut. Once the halibut are worked into a feeding frenzy, they are more likely to bite at a fly.

With conditions right, the halibut fly fisherman stands a fair chance at hook-



ing up. If the conditions are less favorable — like wind or ripping current — I would recommend moving on to a more cooperative species.

**BLACK ROCKFISH OR SILVER SALMON:** Both black rockfish and silver salmon are schooling fish often found from the surface down to 40 feet deep. They feed on the same forage and can be caught on the same fly tackle.

You can lighten up the tackle for these fish to an 8- to 10-weight rod with a 500-grain sinking tip. I would recommend a 15-pound test leader. Although feeding silvers and rockfish will readily strike at most lures, herring and sand lance patterns with a bit of chartreuse seem to work best.

I usually back up to a rockpile or pinnacle that comes from over 200 feet to around 20 or 30 feet from the surface and hold the boat into the current while the fisherman casts to the shallow spot. Sometimes it is necessary either to chum with chopped up herring or drop over a small jig like the Luhr Jensen B2 Squid with a shrimp fly above it, hook up a couple of rockfish and reel them slowly to the boat. This will bring the school in close to the boat, making it possible to catch fish in shallower water. I have also had good luck fishing shallow in the kelp as well.

For silver salmon you will need to find a school of fish and an area with few other boats, as the fish become very difficult to fool on a fly if there are hundreds of other lures

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## North Gulf Coast

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and bait in the water. If you leave port early, stay out late or fish weekdays, you can beat the crowds and have a fishing hole to yourself. You can try fishing with conventional gear and break out the fly rods after you start getting into silvers.

You can find very good fly fishing action on rockfish and salmon, in season, right inside Resurrection Bay in Seward. Try all the shorelines on the outer coast of Resurrection Bay. Especially productive are Mary's Bay, Pony

**The entire shoreline from the Cape down to Chat Cove holds schools of nice black rockfish.**

Cove, Cheval Narrows and, closer in, look for salmon at Callisto Head. The black rockfish action is even better just around Cape Ailaik. The entire shoreline from the Cape down to Chat Cove holds schools of nice black rockfish. Further down the coast in both directions, the rockfish are larger and even more plentiful. A couple of years ago, Kenai River guide Fred Talleen experienced a very good rockfish bite near Elrington Light in the kelp beds. He was in 12 feet of water using a light fly rod. Last season, outdoor writer Chris Battin, while out on the *Crackerjack*, caught some beautiful silvers while sight casting to the shallow-feeding salmon in Pony Cove at the mouth of Resurrection Bay. Finally, last fall, Tony Weaver and several other experienced fly fishermen found the rockfish in a feeding frenzy near Chat Island. We had triple hook-ups on fly tackle all afternoon!

The best part of catching rockfish shallow is that you can release these slow-growing fish to fight another day. Remember, the black rockfish are susceptible to localized over-harvest. Practice catch-and-release if you are catching them in less than 50 feet of water. Check Alaska Department of Fish and Game regulations regarding bag limits of black and dusky rockfish before you start fishing.

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