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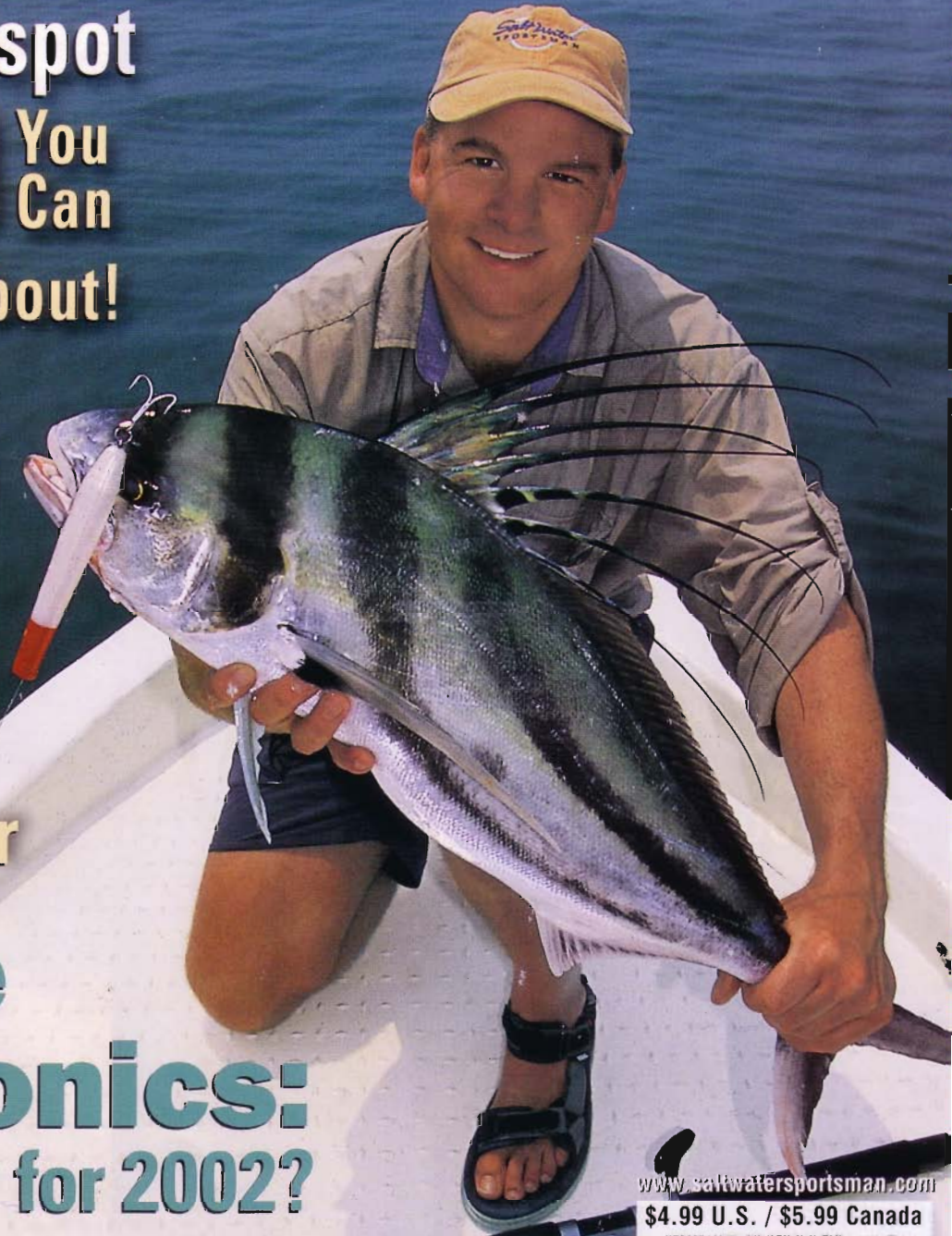
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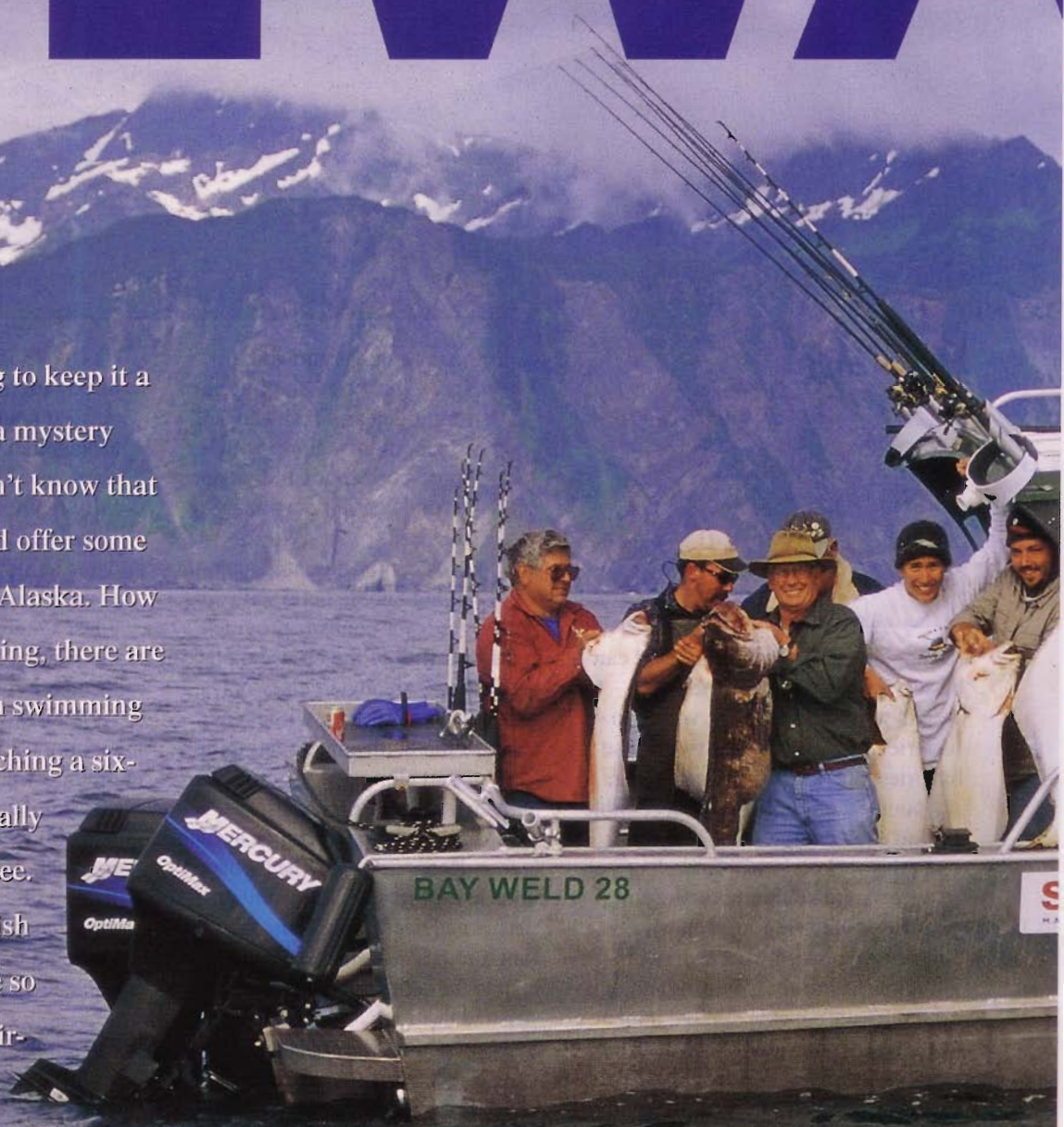


Time4
MEDIA

WITH ACCESS TO SOME OF THE FINEST FISHING IN THE
AND ROCKFISH, IT'S A WONDER THAT THE TOWN OF

SEWARD

No one is trying to keep it a secret, so it's a mystery why more people don't know that the waters off Seward offer some of the best fishing in Alaska. How good is it? For one thing, there are so many coho salmon swimming past Seward that catching a six-fish daily limit is usually a slam-dunk guarantee. "Chicken" halibut (fish under 40 pounds) are so abundant that they virtually carpet the bottom of nearby Prince William



Photos by Dave Vedder

PACIFIC NORTHWEST FOR HALIBUT, LINGCOD, SALMON
SEWARD, ALASKA, HASN'T RECEIVED MORE ATTENTION.

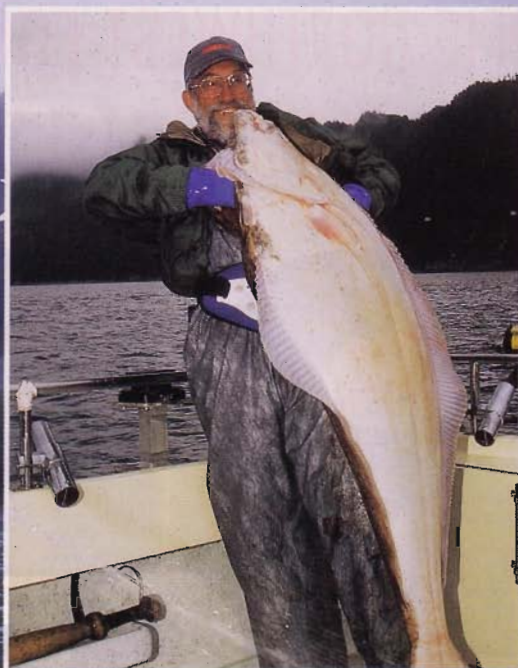
WARD'S SECRET

BY DAVE VEDDER

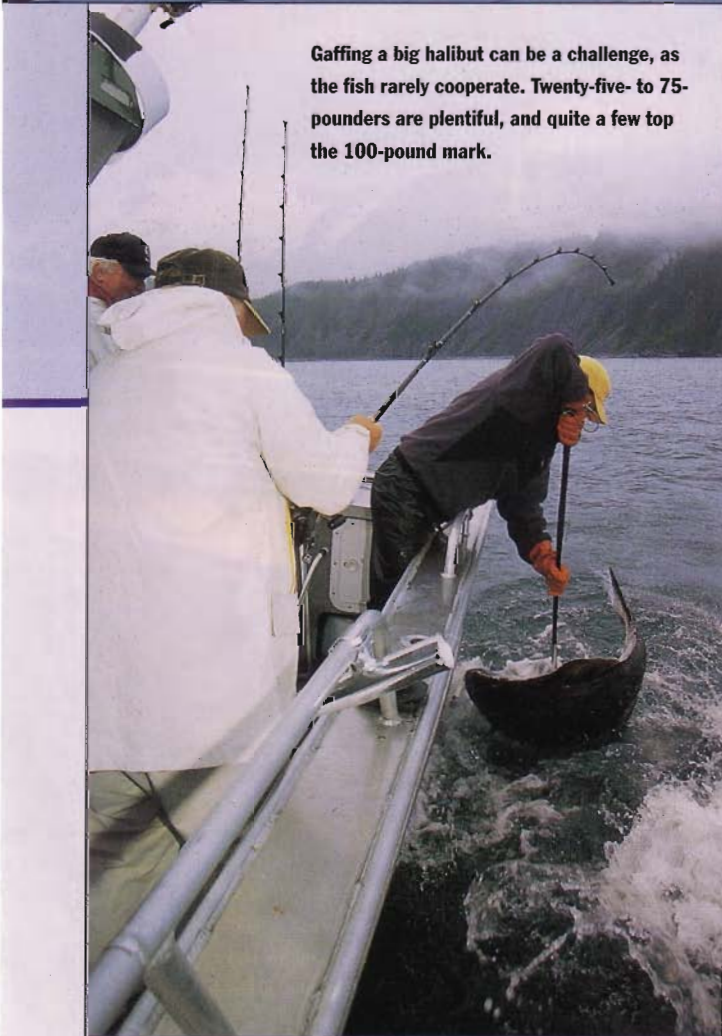


Anglers aboard the *ProFish-N-Sea* display part of the day's catch: five keeper halibut and a big lingcod. The waters off Seward abound with these species, as well as coho and pink salmon, during the warm-weather months.

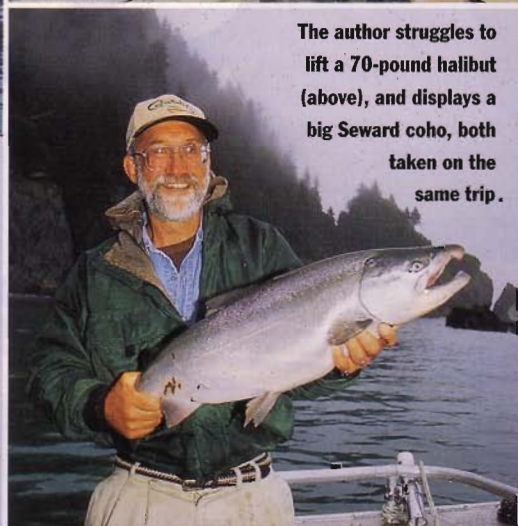
There's spectacular scenery all around Seward,
This is Whidbey Bay, one of the most popular
areas to take coho.



The author struggles to lift a 70-pound halibut (above), and displays a big Seward coho, both taken on the same trip.



Gaffing a big halibut can be a challenge, as the fish rarely cooperate. Twenty-five- to 75-pounders are plentiful, and quite a few top the 100-pound mark.



Sound, and larger "barndoor" butts are taken almost every day. Trophy lingcod are numerous to the point that potential IGFA records are routinely caught and eaten by the locals!

You would think that such phenomenal fishing would be the talk of savvy anglers across the country, but the word on Seward just isn't getting out, much to the chagrin of the local Chamber of Commerce and the skippers of the town's tiny charter fleet. In fact, I might never have learned of the bounty of this area if it weren't for a large dose of serendipity.

It was a stroke of luck that I crossed paths with Richard Smith, the Northwest regional sales manager for Simrad, a leading manufacturer of marine electronics. Smith told me that in an attempt to strengthen sales among the Alaska fishing fleet, Simrad had sponsored two of Seward's top charter captains: Andy Mezirow of the *Crackerjack* and Steve Zernia of the *ProFish-N-Sea*. In exchange for the sponsorship, Mezirow and Zernia agreed to field-test Simrad products and host Simrad executives for a few days of fishing

PLANNING A SEWARD SOJOURN

When to Go: Some Seward skippers begin their season as early as April. The fishing can be excellent at this time, but the weather is unpredictable. By May the weather usually settles down and the fishing for halibut and lingcod can be excellent. Silvers are usually present by mid-July, but August offers the best salmon fishing. Pink salmon are abundant in even-numbered years beginning around late July and continuing strong through August. September can offer great halibut and lingcod action, but the weather again becomes unpredictable.

What to Bring: Top-notch raingear is a must, as are rubber boots. Plan on bringing plenty of warm clothes with a base of polypropylene longjohns and several layers of wool or synthetics. Unsettled weather is possible any month in Seward, but warm, sunny days are common in May, June and July. Mezirow provides excellent light tackle. If you have special gear needs, bring your own.

How to Get There: Alaska Airlines has dozens of flights a day into Anchorage. From there you can rent a car, take the train or take a charter flight to Seward. The drive from Anchorage to Seward is one of Alaska's most scenic and takes just over two hours.

Where to Stay: Seward has many types of lodging, from posh resorts to bed-and-breakfasts and economical motels.

For Reservations or Information: Contact Andy Mezirow or Steve Zernia at Crackerjack Charters, (888) 385-1312 or (907) 224-2606; e-mail fishinfo@crackerjackcharters.com. Or visit www.outdoorsdirectory.com/akpages/crackerjack. A full-day charter on the *Crackerjack* is \$200 per person, \$1,175 for the entire boat. Another option is Alaskan Fishing Adventures, (800) 548-3474; www.alaskanfishing.com. For information contact the Seward Chamber of Commerce at (907) 224-8051; chamber@seward.net. — *Dave Vedder*

each summer. When Smith offered to let me join the Simrad crew on their 2001 trip, I jumped at the chance.

Coho Chaos

Smith, Simrad CFO Gary Marvin and I arrived in Seward on a misty August afternoon and immediately headed for the docks to watch the return of the charter fleet. The *Crackerjack* arrived and began unloading a huge catch of coho, halibut and lingcod. Several of the ling appeared to weigh more than 40 pounds, and a few of the halibut were easily over 100 pounds. The coho ran in the ten- to 16-pound class. Suddenly Seward was looking pretty good!

The next morning, five of us piled aboard Zernia's 28-foot aluminum boat. Like most Seward charter vessels, the *ProFish-N-Sea* can accommodate six anglers. It's powered by twin 225-hp outboards, which push it along at a brisk 28 knots. I soon learned why Zernia had such a need for speed.

Continued on page 126



This huge female lingcod, estimated at well over 50 pounds, was released. Five lings over 40 pounds — including one pushing 60 — were caught and released by the author's group in a single day.