

Chinook salmon are king in coming weeks

Local News

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Summer fishing seasons are now in full swing, requiring anglers to make some tough decisions about how to spend their time on the water in the days ahead. Salmon, steelhead, trout, crab, sturgeon, bass and walleye – all are now available for harvest.

But for thousands of anglers, nothing beats the thrill of reeling in a big chinook salmon. Many are doing just that as waves of chinook move south toward the Washington coast, then east into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, coastal streams and the Columbia River.

“This season is off to a good start, and it should only get better,” said John Long, statewide salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).
“Right now, anglers are catching chinook salmon from the Washington coast and Puget Sound to the upper Columbia River, with additional fisheries opening in the next few weeks.”

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Starting July 8, the catch limit off the coast will increase from one adult chinook salmon to two as part of anglers’ daily limit. Beginning July 16, anglers will be able to catch and keep hatchery chinook in marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) of Puget Sound.

Fishery managers estimate that nearly 653,000 fall chinook will return to the Columbia River this season, about 234,000 more than last year. Another 226,500 chinook are expected to return to rivers flowing into Puget Sound.

“The majority of the chinook salmon caught in statewide fisheries are hatchery fish, specifically raised for harvest,” Long said. “The regulations include a number of provisions designed to protect weak, wild runs and it is essential that anglers know the rules and follow them out on the water.”

Fishing regulations for salmon and other fisheries are outlined in WDFW’s Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet, available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. In-season updates are also posted on that website and are also available by calling WDFW’s Fishing Hotline at 360-902-2500.

Anglers and others spending time on Puget Sound should also be aware that most areas of the Sound are now open for crabbing. In fact, two additional areas – 7 South and 7 East – near the San Juan Islands open for crabbing July 14. For more information on that and other outdoor activities now available throughout the state, see the regional reports below.

[pagebreak:North Puget Sound]

Fishing: Summer has arrived, and anglers have their pick of numerous fishing opportunities. In the freshwater, anglers can cast for chinook and steelhead at some the region’s rivers, as well as trout and bass at local lakes. On Puget Sound, crab and chinook fisheries are under way, with additional salmon openings around the corner.

Salmon fishing got off to a good start in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers can keep one chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. Catch counts on opening day (July 1) in the San Juans show 46 anglers at the Bellingham ramp checked 12 chinook, while 65 at the Washington Park ramp brought home 15 chinook.

In Marine Area 8-2, fishing continues to be slow at the Tulalip Bay “bubble” fishery, said Thiesfeld. The fishery is currently open each week from Friday through noon Monday through Sept. 6. Anglers fishing the bubble have a two-salmon daily limit. Chinook must measure 22 inches in length to retain.

Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) also is open for salmon fishing, but anglers must release all

chinook through July 15.

Anglers will soon have other opportunities in the region to catch and keep chinook. Beginning July 16, marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 open for hatchery chinook salmon retention. Anglers in those two areas will be allowed to keep hatchery chinook – marked with a clipped adipose fin – as part of a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing Marine Area 9 also must release chum salmon.

The chinook selective fisheries in marine areas 9 and 10 run through Aug. 31. Thiesfeld reminds anglers that regulations vary for inner Elliott Bay, Sinclair Inlet and public fishing piers in those marine areas. Check the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information.

When releasing salmon, anglers should keep the fish in the water and avoid using a net, Thiesfeld said. If a net is needed, use a rubber net or a soft knotless nylon or cotton net.

Thiesfeld also suggests that anglers:

- Look for the adipose fin while playing the fish, and use polarized sunglasses to reduce glare.

- Avoid the use of light tackle and play the fish quickly to avoid exhausting it.

- Modify tackle to reduce potential injury to the fish. For example, use circle hooks when mooching and only one hook on hoochies and bucktails.

- Use a dehooker to remove the hook.

- Cut the leader if the fish has swallowed the hook.

- Avoid touching or handling the fish, especially around the eyes and gills.
- Support the entire length of the fish if it must be lifted out of the water.
- Do not lift the fish by the tail or jaw.
- Gently place the fish back in the water.

Anglers can find information on selective fishing and selective fishing techniques on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/selective/techniques/>.

Meanwhile, the crab fishery is under way in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 and 10. Fisheries in those areas are open on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule, plus the entire Labor Day weekend. The southern and eastern portions of Marine Area 7 will open July 14 under the same weekly schedule.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. See WDFW's sport-crabbing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/>) for more information.

In freshwater, anglers can fish for hatchery chinook salmon on the Skagit and Cascade rivers. The Skagit is open to hatchery chinook retention from the Highway 530 bridge at Rockport to the Cascade River. On the Cascade, anglers can fish from the mouth of the river to the Rockport-Cascade Road Bridge. Both stretches are open through July 15. The daily limit on the Skagit and Cascade rivers is four hatchery chinook, two of which may be adults (chinook salmon at least 24 inches in length).

On the Skykomish, a new rule that went into effect July 6 prohibits the retention of chinook from the mouth upstream to the Wallace River, the only portion of the river that was open to salmon fishing. Low chinook returns to the Wallace River Hatchery prompted WDFW to close the river to chinook

retention to help ensure enough salmon make it back to the hatchery to meet spawning goals. For more information, check the emergency rule change at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/erule.jsp?id=927>.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all fisheries on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Wildlife viewing: Now's a good time to head to the Ballard Locks to check out salmon passing the fish ladder viewing windows. Several hundred sockeye pass through the fish ladder daily, and in the next couple of weeks chinook should start showing up in greater numbers. The Ballard Locks are located in northwest Seattle where the Lake Washington Ship Canal enters Shilshole Bay and Puget Sound. For information, call the locks' Visitor Center in Seattle at (206) 783-7059.

Whalewatchers in the region recently reported a unique sighting. About 100 Pacific white-sided dolphins were spotted north of the San Juan Islands. "They put on an amazing show, riding our wake and breaching," according to a report on the Orca Network (<http://www.orcanetwork.org/sightings/map.html>).

Elsewhere, birders visiting Marymoor Park in Redmond spotted numerous species, including wood ducks, a barn owl, several Rufous hummingbirds, a purple martin and a Bullock's oriole.

[pagebreak:South Sound/Olympic Peninsula]

Fishing: Anglers' chances of catching and keeping a chinook salmon off the Washington coast have improved in recent days with the start of non-selective fisheries for chinook in all ocean areas. Chinook can now be retained coastwide, whether fin-clipped or not.

Now, another change in state fishing rules will allow anglers to keep two of those fish per day. Starting July 8, they will be able to retain two chinook — instead of just one — as part of their two-salmon daily limit.

As in previous years, only coho with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar may be retained as part of that limit. Anglers may now retain coho in all ocean areas, although this year's recreational quota for coho is 67,200 fish, down from 176,400 last year.

Patrick Pattillo, WDFW's salmon policy coordinator, said the state initially took a cautious approach in setting the limits for the coastal chinook fishery this summer.

"With predictions of chinook stocks nearly three times as large as last year, we were concerned that we could see very high catch rates for chinook — as we did in 2002 — resulting in an early closure," said Pattillo. "But from what we've seen so far, we no longer have that concern."

Even so, the fishery has been productive — especially around Westport. During the marked selective chinook fishery in June, anglers caught approximately 4,571 chinook off the coast between the opening and June 27. The vast majority of those fish were taken in Marine Area 2 off Westport where nearly 7,000 anglers landed 4,263 marked chinook. The mark rate there was 73 percent.

On July Fourth, when non-selective rules took effect, fish counters sampled 245 anglers in Westport with 129 chinook and 82 coho. In Ilwaco, the 603 anglers sampled had caught 733 coho and 83 chinook.

"The effort hasn't been real high, yet, but it will build this summer," said Doug Milward, WDFW ocean fisheries manager. "It always does, especially around Ilwaco."

Meanwhile, salmon fisheries opened July 1 in marine areas 5 and 6 in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, where early reports indicate fishing for hatchery chinook will be similar to last year's successful fishery. The waters around Port Angeles provided the best salmon fishing for the opener. Between July 1 and 4, creel counts showed that about 400 anglers reeled in approximately 160 chinook salmon at Ediz Hook.

Olson's Resort and Van Riper's Resort in Sekiu both provided reasonably good salmon fishing, with anglers throughout both marine areas also landing a few rockfish, lingcod and greenlings.

Elsewhere in Puget Sound, fishing effort has been generally light. In Marine Area 11 off Tacoma and Vashon Island, creel counts the week of June 28-July 4 produced 61 chinook. Most of those fish were caught off Point Defiance and near Gig Harbor. On July 3, 165 anglers were surveyed with five chinook and 88 flatfish. So far, very few coho have shown themselves in Puget Sound.

Marine Area 9, west of Whidbey Island, opens to salmon fishing July 16.

The rules for catching chinook and coho vary depending on the marine area. All of the seasons and rules can be found in the 2010 Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet. The pamphlet is free at the more than 600 stores that sell hunting and fishing licenses. It's available at WDFW offices and at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html.

If crab is your seafood of choice, you're in luck. Dungeness and red rock crab seasons are open in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and most areas of Puget Sound. Dungeness and red rock crab seasons are:

- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (Tacoma-Vashon) – Opened June 18 and runs through Jan. 2, seven days a week.

- Marine areas 6, 8-1, 8-2, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (much of Puget Sound) – Opened July 1 and are open Wednesday through Saturday through Sept. 6, and open the entire Labor Day weekend.

- Marine areas 7 South and East (south and east of the San Juan Islands) – Will open July 14 through Sept. 30, Wednesday through Saturday, and the entire Labor Day weekend.

There is a daily limit of five Dungeness crab in Puget Sound. Minimum size is 6¼-inches and only males in hardshell condition may be kept. In the Sound, all gear must be removed from the water on days when the fishery is closed.

The daily limit of red rock crab is six in all marine areas. Minimum size is five inches and either sex may be kept.

Crab fishing rules can be found on pages 137-139 of the 2010-11 edition of Washington's Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet, which contains maps of all the marine areas and sub-areas. The pamphlet is free and available at the more than 600 stores where hunting and fishing licenses are sold. The pamphlet also can be downloaded from WDFW's web site at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

Before heading out, crabbers should check for any emergency rule changes adopted since the fishing pamphlet was published. Those changes can be found on WDFW's website at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/> or by calling the Shellfish Rule Change toll-free hotline at (866) 880-5431.

Lake Aberdeen and Lake Sylvia in Grays Harbor County both received significant plants of rainbow trout this spring and well into June, and were among the 10 Region 6 lakes listed on WashingtonLakes.com's "Top Lakes Scoreboard." Lake Tarboo in Jefferson County and Lake Louise in Pierce County also made the list.

Wildlife viewing: Aluminum recycling is taking a back seat at one household in Chimacum, Jefferson County, where a small brown bird, with a yellow underbelly, has built a nest with five eggs on the home's can crusher.

Fortunately for the bird and her soon-to-be offspring, the woman who does the recycling is also an avid birdwatcher. Her July 6 report and dozens of other recent bird sightings are at <http://birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/TWET.html>

Be aware that with warm summer weather finally here, the ground cover that benefitted from a wet spring is drying out. WDFW enforcement officers and land managers are reminding outdoor recreationists many of the Department's 900,000 acres in 32 wildlife area complexes and over 150 water access sites across the state do not allow camp fires or any other kinds of open fires.

Where campfires are allowed, they are usually restricted to metal fire rings and must be kept to less than three feet in height and diameter. Specific rules by property can be found at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/index.html .

[pagebreak:Southwest Washington]

Fishing: Anglers continue to reel in hefty summer chinook salmon on the lower Columbia River, although the fishery is being reshaped by an influx of upriver steelhead, changing river conditions and new fishing opportunities on the coast. Other considerations include a record sockeye run and the fact that sturgeon retention is allowed in the estuary at least through July 11.

During the first four days of July, WDFW interviewed 310 boat anglers on the lower Columbia River with 21 adult summer chinook, 30 steelhead and no sockeye. Also contacted were 989 bank anglers with 33 adult summer chinook, 124 steelhead and eight sockeye.

“The fishery has begun to change with the arrival of increasing numbers of upriver steelhead,” said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. “Those fish are starting to draw anglers away from the deep water toward the bank, where they’re targeting hatchery steelhead and sockeye.”

Under this year’s expanded season, the daily limit for adult salmonids is two marked hatchery chinook or marked hatchery steelhead (or one of each) on the mainstem Columbia River from the Megler-Astoria Bridge upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco.

The current mix of summer chinook and steelhead contains a significant portion of wild fish, so anglers should be sure to check for a clipped adipose fin and healed scar on both species, Hymer said.

Anglers can also count any sockeye measuring at least 12 inches toward their two-adult daily limit from the Megler-Astoria Bridge to Priest Rapids Dam. Through July 6, just over 353,000 sockeye had been counted at Bonneville Dam, surpassing the previous record of 335,300 fish in 1947.

But counting sockeye is not the same as catching them, Hymer said. "These silver torpedoes are fairly single-minded when it comes to moving upriver so anglers should really consider them 'bonus fish' if they catch one," he said. One sockeye was recently recycled downstream to the Massey Bar on the Cowlitz River three times during the same week and returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery each time.

Most hatchery steelhead caught in recent days were taken along the banks of the Columbia River from Longview downstream. Averaging four to six pounds apiece, these upriver fish are expected to light up a number of fisheries as they move toward hatcheries on the upper Columbia and the lower Snake River. Look for them later this month at the mouth of the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers plus Drano Lake and the White Salmon River, where they typically dip into the cooler water of the tributaries to beat the heat.

Fishing is also expected to be good this month on the Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis, Washougal and Klickitat rivers as separate runs of hatchery steelhead move into those tributaries to the Columbia River.

But, while summer steelhead have begun to upstage summer chinook, Hymer expects to see anglers catch a lot more salmon — including the occasional 40 pounder — before the fishery closes at the end of the day July 31. According to an updated forecast, 75,000 summer chinook will return to the Columbia this year — the fourth largest run since 1980.

Hymer notes, however, that fishing tactics for chinook salmon have changed since the fishery got under way last month. Since then, average water temperatures have risen to 63 degrees and flows have dropped by half.

"Fishing tactics have changed to reflect the conditions," Hymer said. "Most anglers fishing for summer chinook are going deep — 20 to 30 feet down — and using large plugs wrapped with sardine fillets in addition to wobblers and other fall gear."

One question is whether salmon fishing might be better in the ocean. All areas off the Washington coast are now open for the retention of both chinook and coho salmon. For more information, see the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula of this report. Anglers have also been catching good-size landlocked coho at Riffe Lake in recent days.

Another option is to fish for white sturgeon on the Columbia River below the Wauna powerlines, although that could present a challenge given the low catch rates in those waters. The current opening runs through July 11, after which fishery managers from Washington and Oregon will meet to discuss whether to again extend the fishery.

During the week ending July 5, private boat anglers interviewed at the Deep River and Knappton ramps averaged a legal-size sturgeon for every 9.5 rods. At the ports of Chinook and Ilwaco, 41 percent of charter boat customers caught legal-size fish, but private boaters averaged just one fish for every 12 rods.

Meanwhile, the shad fishery has about run its course, but walleye fishing is picking up in The Dalles Pool. Bass fishing is also improving as water temperatures rise.

Trout anglers should know that Goose Lake near Carson has been planted with 5,500 catchable-size brown trout and 6,000 cutthroat since mid-June.

Wildlife viewing: Birders looking for a "personal first" along the lower Columbia River might want to keep their eyes peeled for eastern kingbirds. Bob Flores, a veteran birder from Ridgefield, recently reported seeing two of them on Bachelor Island, an area not generally open to the public. "I feel this is part of a larger kingbird movement seen up and down the state," he wrote in a posting on the Tweeters birding website (<http://www.scn.org/earth/tweeters/>). "If there are kingbirds on the island, there could be kingbirds along Lower River Road or further north along the [Columbia] river."

Eastern kingbirds are considered common in eastern Washington and much of the rest of the United States, but are rarely seen west of the Cascades. Black and gray with a white chest, these birds have progressively moved west in recent decades. The bird's most distinctive field marking is a white band at the tip of its black tail. They stay in Washington until September, then return to their wintering grounds in South America.

A more common sight in southwest Washington — especially at this time of year — is black bears. With temperatures rising and more people heading outdoors, WDFW is reminding citizens of steps they can take to avoid problems with these potentially dangerous animals.

"The best advice we can offer people is don't feed the bears," said Capt. Murray

Schlenker, who heads WDFW's regional enforcement program in southwest Washington. "The majority of bear problems begin when people either intentionally or unintentionally feed the animals."

Unsecured garbage containers, garbage sacks left outside in the hot sun, pet food left outdoors, and birdfeeders can attract hungry bears looking for a meal, Schlenker said. Bar-b-que grills and briquettes also contain scents that attract bears as well.

While bears naturally avoid people, the animals can lose their instinctive fear of humans and become increasingly aggressive when they are allowed access to those items, Schlenker said. That's when the situation can become dangerous for both humans and the animal.

"Because our first priority is public safety, bears that have lost their fear of humans are often euthanized," he said. "That's unfortunate, because the animal often winds up paying the price for human carelessness and indifference." For more information about avoiding trouble with bears, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/bears.htm>.

[pagebreak:Eastern Washington]

Fishing: Fishing is picking up for warmwater species in waterways throughout the south end of the region, especially during cooler evening hours. Smallmouth bass are found throughout the Snake River and channel catfish can be found in its backwaters and sloughs. Both species are caught near the mouth of the Walla Walla River.

Smallmouth bass may be caught below Prescott in the lower portion of the Touchet River. The Columbia River and its connected sloughs have yellow perch, crappie, smallmouth and largemouth bass, channel catfish, brown bullheads, an occasional walleye, and other species.

Waters in the north end of the region are also seeing warmwater fish action. The Pend Oreille

River's Boundary Dam reservoir is good for smallmouth bass, and its Box Canyon Dam reservoir is good for largemouth bass. Northern pike are also throughout the river. Stevens County's Pierre Lake has largemouth bass, crappie, and bullhead catfish. Loon and Deer lakes in southern Stevens County have both species of bass, plus bullheads, perch, and bluegill. Pend Oreille County's Diamond Lake is usually good for perch this time of year.

Long Lake, the reservoir off the Spokane River in northwest Spokane County has been good for crappie, perch and both smallmouth and largemouth bass. Chapman Lake in southwest Spokane County is also producing both largemouth and smallmouth bass catches, plus some kokanee. Downs Lake, also in the southwest part of the county, has a few perch and some really nice largemouth bass.

Spokane County's Amber, Badger, and Williams lakes continue to provide good catches of rainbow and cutthroat trout during early morning or evening hours. Rock Lake in Whitman County also continues to be good for both rainbow and brown trout fishing.

Wildlife viewing: As temperatures rise and summer advances, wildlife viewing is best at dawn and dusk when animals are more active. Most species are tending offspring now, so viewing should be from a distance with the aid of binoculars and scopes to avoid stressing young families. And motorists should slow down on roadways where traditional deer crossings now may include fawns.

Bird watching, or at least listening, can be productive throughout the region. Many of the 51 locations featured in the Palouse to Pines Loop of The Great Washington State Birding Trail map provide good summertime birding. Riverside State Park, on the Spokane River just northwest of downtown Spokane, has American dippers and pileated woodpeckers. The Little Spokane River Natural Area further north has ospreys and common mergansers. Mt. Spokane State Park northeast of Spokane has red crossbills and western tanagers. Liberty Lake County Park to the east of Spokane has common nighthawks and northern pygmy owls.

In Pend Oreille County, the U.S. Forest Service Noisy Creek campground on the shores of Sullivan Lake is a good spot to see common loons and red-necked grebes. The Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, east of Colville, hosts white-headed woodpeckers, American redstarts, Swainson's thrushes and many more species. WDFW's Sherman Creek Wildlife Area on the shores of Lake Roosevelt in Ferry County can provide glimpses of common and Barrow's goldeneyes on the water.

Copies of the region's birding map are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office at

2315 N. Discovery Place (509-892-1001).

WDFW enforcement officers throughout the region continue to respond to complaints about problem black bears. Most situations involve bears getting into unsecured garbage, pet food, bird feeders, compost piles, or other attractions. "Many of us live or recreate in bear country, so we need to take precautions to avoid these kinds of problems," says WDFW Captain Mike Whorton.

Salmon and steelhead watching may be good in southeast rivers and streams, where strong runs of these ocean-going fish are now returning. There's no non-tribal fishing for these species open right now, said WDFW District Fish Biologist Glen Mendel, but careful watchers can help prevent potential poaching or harassment of vulnerable fish.

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Fishing: Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist, said salmon fishing in the mainstem Columbia River above Highway 173 Bridge in Brewster, and in the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers, was slow at the start on July 1.

"It's picking up considerably now as more fish pass over Wells Dam and start to stack up off the mouth of the Okanogan River," he said. "Anglers should check the current fishing rules pamphlet very closely, in addition to any emergency rule changes for opening dates and daily catch limits. And remember there is a night closure and anti-snagging rule in effect for the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers."

Anglers can retain adult sockeye salmon in the mainstem Columbia River above Priest Rapids Dam and in the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers. The daily limit is six salmon, but only up to three adult chinook, of which only one wild adult chinook may be retained. All sockeye and chinook with a floy or anchor tag attached must be released, and all coho and steelhead must be released. For all the details of this fishery, see <http://bit.ly/cE8tGj>.

Okanogan County lowland lakes are continuing to provide rainbow trout for both selective gear and bait anglers. "Cooler weather this past month has kept surface water temperatures cooler and the trout more active than normal," Jateff said.

The water level on the Methow River is starting to drop and will begin to provide opportunities for trout fishing during the catch-and-release season that began last month. Selective gear must be used and no bait is allowed.

"If you're interested in spiny ray fishing try Leader Lake for bluegill and Patterson Lake for yellow perch," Jateff said. "There are no daily limits for either of these species in Okanogan County."

Fishing at Banks Lake for rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, and walleye has been decent, according to last month's WDFW creel reports. Anglers at Banks were averaging a little over an hour of fishing for every trout and bass caught, and about two hours for every walleye caught. Some largemouth bass were also caught at an average rate of about four hours per fish, but the sample size was very low.

Art Viola, WDFW district fish biologist, reminds anglers that Blackbird Island Pond, a juveniles only fishery in Leavenworth off the Wenatchee River in Chelan County, will not open to fishing until July 15. "We've had such an unusually cold spring that juvenile steelhead aren't expected to leave until mid July this year," Viola said. "So we won't be stocking trout in the pond yet." Blackbird Island Pond is used as both a hatchery steelhead acclimation pond and a trout-stocked fishing pond for anglers under 15 years of age.

Wildlife viewing: Although the best times are now at dawn and dusk as summer heat rises, wildlife viewing can be productive at many wildlife areas and state parks throughout the region. WDFW's Sinlahekin unit has everything from butterflies to white-tailed deer. Both Conconully and Fort Okanogan state parks have watchable beavers. The Indian Dan Canyon unit of the Wells Wildlife Area has sharp-tailed, blue and ruffed grouse. The Bridgeport Bar unit of Wells has white pelicans and osprey. These and many other locations are detailed in the North Central Washington Wildlife Viewing map, available at WDFW's regional office, 1550 Alder St. N.W. in Ephrata (509-754-4624).

Red-tailed hawks and other soaring raptors may be sharing the thermals with paragliders at WDFW's Chelan Butte unit of the Chelan Wildlife Area this month. The Paragliding World Cup will be held in the Chelan area July 17-24, after a U.S. National Series paragliding cross country race

July 10-15. As the Paragliding World Cup organizers note on their website (<http://www.chelanpwc.com>), the area has long been known for strong updrafts and the potential for long cross country flights by paraglider and hanglider pilots from around the world. Mid-July is considered the prime flying season at Chelan, with climb rates exceeding seven meters per second. WDFW wildlife area managers say the activity shouldn't conflict with wildlife in the area, but they advise participants and spectators to stay on established roads and trails to avoid the potential for wildfires.

[pagebreak:Southcentral Washington]

Fishing: Sockeye salmon have been moving up the Columbia River in record numbers in recent weeks, arriving in Central Washington waters just in time for the summer weather. But catching sockeye is proving to be a challenge. Fortunately, there are plenty of other options for anglers right now, including chinook, rainbow trout, bass and catfish.

A creel check in the John Day Pool conducted the week of June 21-27 tallied 150 anglers in 60 boats, along with 36 bank fishers. The bank anglers caught an estimated 53 hatchery summer chinook and released 14 wild fish. No sockeye were observed in the catch that week, even though upwards of 21,000 sockeye passed by the John Day Dam each day.

The number of boaters dropped off dramatically the following week, as did the catch. Thirty-four anglers surveyed during the week ending July 4 had caught three hatchery chinook and released three wild fish. As in the previous week, all salmon were caught from the bank.

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW's fish biologist in Pasco, credits high water in the Columbia River for the difficulty anglers have had catching salmon from a boat. Conditions, though, are improving. Flows in the Yakima River is back to normal, and the Snake and Columbia rivers have begun to go down, setting the stage for better bass and walleye fishing, said Hoffarth.

Hoffarth reminds anglers that all wild, unmarked chinook salmon and steelhead must be released. The daily limit is six hatchery chinook, up to two of which may be adults. Anglers must stop fishing

once they retain the adult portion of their daily limit. Any steelhead retained counts toward the daily limit of two adult fish, said Hoffarth, who reminds anglers that the Yakima River is closed to salmon and steelhead fishing.

Steelhead fishing remains closed for the Columbia River upstream of the Highway 395 bridge and in the Snake River until the fall.

As for the difficulty of catching sockeye, WDFW fish and wildlife biologist Joe Hymer says that for a variety of reasons they are a hard fish to catch. "Sockeye mainly feed on zooplankton/krill, and most (river) anglers don't use gear that a sockeye would typically eat," he said. "A lot of times they use gear that is too big."

The single-minded nature of sockeye also makes them hard to catch, Hymer said. "Sockeye move through an area pretty quickly," he said. "In the lower Columbia, we see pretty good catches if the water is high and cool. But when the water drops and warms, the fish go deeper. Not until they get into a concentrated area like Lake Wenatchee and Lake Osoyoos, where anglers troll slow using gear that's small and easier to bite, do catch rates go up."

As in other areas, water levels in the upper Naches and upper Yakima tributaries have continued to drop, making them easier to fish. Eric Anderson, WDFW fish and wildlife biologist in Yakima, said this trend should continue through the summer, when fishing in most tributaries should be good for wild trout, cutthroat, rainbow and brook trout. Anglers should note that it is closed to fishing for or retaining bull trout, salmon and steelhead throughout the Yakima River basin.

"We have continued to stock lakes in the region and all are posted on the WDFW website's catchable trout stocking reports," said Anderson. "All of those reports have been updated with the latest triploid trout plants."

Anderson reminds anglers they can research lakes by county by going to the 2010 Washington Fishing Prospects report <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>. He advises, however, that before heading out to an unfamiliar lake or stream, anglers should check the Washington Fishing Regulations at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html

"Each stream and lake you intend to fish may have different rules and catch limit restrictions," said Anderson.

For those who don't mind a little hike, Anderson says that as the weather warms and the snow recedes, Central Washington's high mountain lakes provide good angling opportunities. The region's high lakes fish stocking information is available at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/r3_highlakes.htm

Kokanee are continuing to bite at Keechelus and Rimrock lakes, where the daily catch limit is 16 fish.

Jumbo triploid trout were planted at Lost Lake in Kittitas County, as well as in Dog and Leech lakes in Yakima County. These fish are running about 1.5 pounds each. Leech Lake is fly-fishing only. Also in June, 4,500 catchable-size trout and 200 jumbos were planted in Easton Pond in Kittitas County.

Sturgeon fishing remains open in Lake Wallula (McNary Dam to Priest Rapids/Ice Harbor Dams) through July of this year. However, sturgeon fishing is prohibited from in the sturgeon sanctuaries from Goose Island upstream to Ice Harbor Dam in the Snake River and upstream of the Priest Rapids Hatchery outlet to Priest Rapids Dam in the Columbia River.

Hunting: WDFW has published this year's special hunt drawing results. Hunters can find out how they fared in the lottery by going to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/> and typing in their 11 digit WILD ID number.

Wildlife viewing: While this is a great time to recreate outdoors, be aware that with summer come mosquitoes, heat and intense sun. Be sure to guard against all three with bug spray, sun screen and plenty of water to keep hydrated. And watch out for rattlesnakes.

This is also the time of year when birds need sources of fresh, cool water.. By keeping bird baths replenished, you can set the stage for close-up views of birds without leaving the comfort of your patio or air conditioned home. Commonly found in backyards this time of year are lots of rufous and calliope hummingbirds feeding at both sugar-water feeders and natural nectar-producing flowers. Those birders who venture to the mountains will be rewarded with a variety of birds, including brown creepers to yellow-rumped warblers.

WDFW biologists are asking hunters and hikers to keep an eye out for Canada geese that have been banded as part of an ongoing effort to track their movements, their lifespan and how they use rural and urban habitat.

This is the third consecutive year of the study. As in past years, WDFW is asking waterfowl hunters and hikers to report leg band information if they harvest or encounter a marked goose. The highly visible collars can be reported by any observer.

Reports of band or collar codes, along with locations and dates, should be made to U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory at 1-800-327-BAND, or online at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/call800.htm>.