

## Atlantic salmon spawn in Island rivers

Atlantic salmon are showing up in our rivers. Hundreds of thousands of Atlantic salmon were freed into the Salish Sea this August after the structural collapse of a Cooke Aquaculture fish farm in Washington State. Some of those fish were caught in nets by First Nations fleets and commercial salmon fishers. The remainder have dispersed throughout the area, and they have been caught off all coasts of Vancouver Island.

Alarming they have been turning up in rivers, including the Nooksack, Puyallup and Snahomish rivers in Washington State, The Harrison and Fraser on the BC mainland and more

recently in Vancouver Island rivers.

Some of the Atlantic salmon were unable to feed normally, their stomachs full of inedible substances like wood chips and mussel shells.

Atlantic salmon in local waters is not new. Since the 1990s almost a million escaped from salmon farms. Despite the industry and the government's assurances that they could never reproduce and displace native Pacific salmon, river snorkel surveys have shown that Atlantic salmon have spawned and hatched in several Vancouver Island rivers. Forensic analysis of scales and body tissue has proven that these fish were hatched in the wild not in fish farms. They have also been found spawning in Alaskan rivers, where Atlantic salmon farming is illegal.

In a paper entitled, *Evidence of Natural Reproduction of Aquaculture-Escaped Atlantic Salmon in a Coastal British*

*Columbia River* University of Victoria biologist John Volpe said, "Twelve juvenile Atlantic salmon composed of two year classes were captured in the Tsitika River, British Columbia." He goes on to explain his process and conclusion that escaped Atlantic salmon are spawning in our rivers. He gathers his data by personally snorkel-swimming the rivers.

Whether these spawners pose a risk to the continued existence of our native fish is not certain. Efforts to deliberately introduce Atlantic salmon to the Pacific in the mid 1900s failed.

The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) meanwhile reports on its website that in BC freshwater systems "No Atlantic salmon, of any life stage, were identified."

DFO asks anglers to report all captures of Atlantic salmon to 1-800-811-6010. Atlantic salmon have black spots on gill covers and the escaped Atlantic salmon weigh about 10 lb.

## - OPENINGS AND CLOSURES -

Before harvesting shellfish check BOTH sanitary and marine biotoxin closures. If there is either the area is closed to harvesting all bivalve shellfish. [www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/contamination/biotox/index-eng.html](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/contamination/biotox/index-eng.html)  
Off the west coast of Vancouver Island, until December 31, 2017, you may retain four coho per day, hatchery marked only.  
A reminder that halibut is closed coast wide for this season. The season is expected to resume April 1, 2018. Lingcod, yelloweye and rockfish also remain closed. Skate, sole, flounder, and perch remain open.

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