

Fishing Journal

Information For The Serious Angler

by John Martinis

December 2014

Fishing Dates

Area 7

Dec 1-April 30

Daily limit two

Chinook, hatchery only

Area 8-1

Nov 1-April 30

Daily limit two

Chinook, hatchery only

Area 8-2

Nov 1-April 30

Daily limit two

Chinook, hatchery only

Area 9

Jan 16-April 15

Daily limit two

Chinook, hatchery only

Resurrection Derby

December 5-6, 2014

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Re-Discovering Areas 8-1 & 8-2

When Area 9 closes on November 30, it will feel like someone let all the air out of the bag. Don't despair. Some of the usual Chinook hot-spots are going to be available again come January 16 when Area 9 reopens. In the meantime, why not go fishing in the Northern part of Puget Sound?

First, let's take a look at [Hat Island \(Gedney Island\)](#). Most Chinook anglers put Hat Island on the back burner until forced to fish that area. Maybe it's about time we take another look at Hat.

If you want to concentrate on larger Chinook, then fish the bar that runs between Hat and Camano Islands. This bar is fairly narrow, so it will take a little navigating skill to stay on top of it. A good suggestion would be to mark several areas across the bar with your GPS that average between 90 to 150 feet. Then move between these points. In addition, mark some spots in Saratoga Passage along the side of Camano Island.

A good tactic for fishing the Hat Island/Camano Island Bar: start trolling the middle of the bar and move toward Camano Head. As you approach the Camano side the water gets shallow, start taking a slow left hand turn. This

turn will take you into Saratoga Passage along the southern side of Camano Island. Along this hook in the bar you will find bait and Chinook that are willing to take your flasher/spoon rig. This is one of those small areas that you need to catalog! Many of these small areas that I point out in my Newsletters are places you can go to on a consistent basis and hook up with a Chinook or two.

The south side of Hat Island can be a little fickle when it comes to hooking big Chinook. But, that's what we get, especially, when the weather gets rougher in December. Start by trolling near mid-island and troll in an easterly direction while maintaining depths between 100 to 150 feet. The bar on the south and east side of Hat Island extends to the east well past the east end of Hat Island. Keep trolling to the east until the depth increases rapidly. The real sweet-spot on this bar is when you are positioned towards the eastern tip of Hat Island. Like most Winter Chinook fishing areas, look for bait and don't stray when you find it. Sometimes in the winter, bait becomes scarce, but small pockets of bait can yield Chinook. So stay tuned to what's happening beneath the surface.

For those who are not familiar with the middle and upper Camano Island, December is the time. This area should not be overlooked. It is not unusual for some angler to boat a mid-teens or larger Chinook in this area. This area gets no respect at all when Area 9 is open. In fact, Saratoga Passage never enters the radar screen when Area 9 is in season. However, there are a few Chinook anglers quietly boating some respectable salmon not far away from

Just Fishing



the Camano Island boat launch.

At Camano Island State Park, you have two main areas for Chinook: [Elger Bay and out in front of the State Park.](#)

Elger Bay is easy to fish. Troll the westerly end of the Bay out to the point of the State Park. Stay in 90 to 150 feet of water and keep looking for bait. You can fish it on either tide, but the incoming tide is going to be the more consistent producer.

Fishing in front of the State Park is a no brainer, fish in 90 to 150 feet of water and parallel to the shoreline. If the tide is running hard, then fish Elger Bay until the water slows down near the end of the tide.

“Zihuatenejo” Roosters

Fishing in a different country and with a guide you never met, leads a person to contemplate, “what's in store”? What's the expectation? Is this guide legit, or a burned out hippie from the 1970's? These are real concerns when you are 3,000 miles from home.

My fishing trip took me Zihuatenejo, Mexico in search of Rooster Fish that are decent in size. In my eyes, that would be one from 25 to 30lbs. A big Rooster could be 50lbs. However, that's like catching a 50lb. Chinook here in the Puget Sound. My dreams and expectations were realistic. All I wanted was the right fishing guide to take me to a spot where I could hookup with a decent sized Rooster Fish. Not knowing anyone who fished for Roosters in the Zihautenejo area, I eventually choose a guy named Ed Kunze.

Ed writes a blog on fishing for the

Zihuatenejo region. Fishing reports like this are hard to come by. In most cases, you have to rely on old information and hope that it's less of a sales pitch and more of the real deal.

He directed me to a fishing pier in downtown Zihuatenejo. I had never been there before, ever. I speak little Spanish and I was in the dark, literally. So here I am around a bunch of strangers all trying to pitch me a fishing trip. All I am just trying to do is find this guy named Ed Kunze who drives a Chevy white Suburban.

Then out of the darkness this fellow comes up to me and says, “Hi John”. “You must be Ed”, I replied. Just like a scene out of an old Humphrey Bogart film. That was the start of one great fishing trip. I guess I was easy to pick out because I was the only Caucasian on the pier.

Great, I thought I was going to jump into a boat at the pier and head out to fish the beaches outside of the boat harbor. No way, we jump into Ed's Suburban and head 120 miles south to Puerto Vicente.

Now picture this: On the passenger side of the Suburban, the mirror looks like it has been gone a long time with just the mount and the wires controlling a mirror blowing in the breeze. Going down the road the hood of the Suburban was certainly not fastened like we would have hoped. I calculated there was about six inches vertical play. I'm sure the AC also quit a long time ago (it's 90 degrees by 10AM most days). Now you got the picture of the start of my Rooster Fishing trip.

We arrive at Puerto Vicente. This is a quaint fishing village in the middle of nowhere. I am telling you, this place is authentic Mexico. This is the real

deal! This is “off the grid” Mexico and really a cool place. Not too much has been published about Puerto Vicente since there is very little sport fishing infrastructure. Basically, it's a fishing village used by locals for harvesting fish for food.

Helio, our skipper, shows up with the “panga” that we will be fishing out of that day. Helio is an old guy with a smile which tells a lot about his rich Mexican heritage. A 17 year old also accompanies us. His name is Adolfo. Little did I know that Adolfo's job was to do the casting. At this point, this sounds strange I know. You'll see, read on.

We load the panga with all the tackle we need for the day. The rods are 10 foot long and the spinning reels hold 300 yards of 30lb. spectra line. The rods and reels look a lot better than the Suburban.

Heading out of the harbor, I ask Ed how far we are going. “About an hour south”, he says.

Is everyone keeping track? It's 120 miles south by car, now an hour south by boat. This is truly an adventure you would read about in a travel magazine. A dream you have but never realize.

We get to our fishing destination. The beaches are truly remote. I am sure that there has been rarely a footprint to be found on any of these pristine sandy shores.

We were 2 to 3 breakers out from the beach and we are casting as far as we could toward the beach.

Remember Adolfo? You will never see anyone cast as far as Adolfo could cast. All I could say was, “Amazing.” Adolfo's job was to tease the Rooster Fish to the boat so that, so I could cast



to the fish that followed his top water plug.

The first fish that I hooked was a Sierre, I get the fish close to the boat and it comes off. That's good, because we are releasing all our fish and the Sierre have a mouth full of sharp teeth.

The next fish that I hooked was a small Dorado. I bring that fish to the boat and it comes off.

We are now several hours into casting these heavy top water plugs. We are also reeling as fast as we can while keeping the plug on the surface. This is a grueling workout in 90 degree sun!

No hook-ups with Roosters at this point. Only one followed our lure to the boat. Looks like catching a decent rooster is on hold until next year.

One hour of fishing left. No more fish, no follows and the air has become really hot and muggy.

I was getting to the point where I didn't think I could make another cast in this heat. Then a Rooster started following Adolfo's plug from about 100 yards away. My heart started thumping. This was probably my last chance for a Rooster on this trip. I could see the Rooster in the crystal clear water moving toward Adolfo's plug. I carefully cast my plug behind the Rooster making sure not to spook the fish. I cranked the spinning reel as fast as I could. Would the Rooster spook when the plug moved past him? This was my only shot. I can't blow it! My plug moves up to the left of the fish about even with his head. The fish took a hard left and the plug disappears like a puff of smoke. This had to be the coolest fish strike of a lifetime. The

visual was incredible.

It was "fish on!" I said to myself, "I can't lose this fish." Please no break-offs. Please, no failures of any kind! I really wanted this one. This Rooster was burning line off of the reel. Man, these are tough fish. There is no cold water fish that swims at this speed.

I pumped the fish to the boat and was thinking, "I have him whipped", not so. He made several more runs at least 100 yards or more. This was a good fish, the one that I traveled 3,000 miles to catch. But, he's not in the boat yet.

I finally gained back most the line that was peeled off the reel several times. The Rooster finally tired but still had plenty of spunk. Now I am working the fish under and around the boat. The fight went from totally horizontal to all vertical. Every time I tell Helio to grab the leader when I bring the fish to the side of the boat, he just smiled. Helio would say, "Senior John, the pesce no ready, si."

Finally, the Rooster tires and I have my trophy fish. This fish weighed close to 30lbs. We tagged it, took a picture and sent him back. The fish swam off toward the surf line, perhaps to be caught again someday. It will probably not be soon since no one might fish this area for some time. On the other hand, maybe Ed might bring another client here in a few weeks.

I know for sure that I will be back on these beaches near Puerto Vicente next November looking for another Rooster in the hot Pacific Ocean sunshine.

Fishing Plugs for Chinook

Flashers and spoons and flashers and squid get a lot of the fanfare when fishing for Chinook. Rightfully so! They are effective and they have a well proven track record for catching Chinook.

What about salmon plugs? Are they something that you get out of the tackle box when the fish box is empty?

Don't short-change salmon plugs, especially for Winter Chinook. They are highly effective and easy to use!

Rigging a salmon plug is as easy as tying the plug on to the end of the fishing line. No leader, no swivels, just you and the plug on each end of the fishing line.

You can easily fish plug and flashers together. In fact, I highly recommend doing so. Rig a flasher and spoon on one downrigger and use a plug on the other downrigger. Assuming there is two anglers in the boat.

Plug speed and flasher speed for Chinook is the same: 2.5-3.0 mph. You could troll a plug much faster but as your speed increase above 3.0 mph you lose your ability to stay close to the bottom.

Plugs that I recommend for Winter Chinook fishing are: [Tomco 602 and 603](#). They are essentially the same plug. One has a red face and the other has a pink face. I like to rig these plugs with a 5/0 stainless mustad siwash hook. Gamakatsu just came out with barbless "Big River" hooks. The Big River hook is another hook that I would recommend. Use a 6/0 Big River hook. The Big River hooks are slightly smaller than the Mustad hooks in the same size.

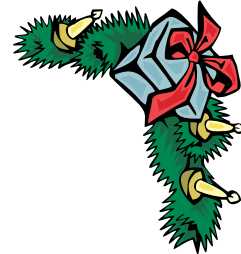
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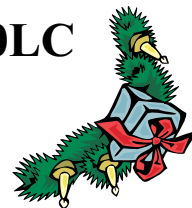
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