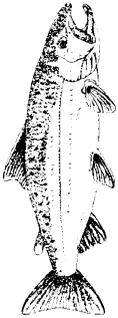


# Fishing in *northern Southeast Alaska*

Nearly all species of salmon, trout, and saltwater fishes common to the northwestern United States and Canada are also found in northern Southeast Alaska. Tackle used to catch a particular species of fish elsewhere will catch fish in northern Southeast. The following fishing tips are general in nature. For more information on a local area, contact the local Sport Fish Division office or a local tackle shop.



*Salmon*

King, coho, and pink salmon are normally taken in salt water by trolling or mooching.

Trolling involves actively pulling a herring, hoochie, plug, or fly through the water fast enough to provide suitable action of the bait or lure. Medium- to heavy-action trolling rods and reels, and spin rods in the 7- to 9-ft range capable of handling up to 8 ounces of lead are used in this fishery. A line of 15- to 40-pound test is usually used. Bait or lures are frequently used in combination with a

flasher or dodger. The same gear will take all three species of salmon; however, anglers targeting on king salmon will often troll slower and deeper than when fishing for coho or pink salmon.

Mooching is usually done from an anchored boat or when drifting or engaged in a very slow troll, primarily using the currents to work the bait. Mooching can be quite effective because it is easier to fish a wider range of depths. Herring is the preferred bait for mooching. Buzzbombs and other jig-type lures will also take salmon in marine areas.

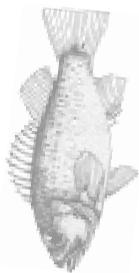
Few marine boat anglers target chum salmon, as they do not take standard baits as readily as other species of salmon, but chum salmon are caught, often being misidentified as a coho salmon. Special gear can be used to entice a chum to bite; one combination rumored to work is a blue flasher about 16 inches in front of a bare blue hook.

Coho and pink salmon can be taken along marine shorelines and in streams by spin casters with a variety of spinning lures. Cohos and

pinks can also be taken in salt and fresh water on a variety of flies.

Terminal freshwater and saltwater king salmon fisheries occur in several communities at enhancement sites. In these areas, kings are returning from releases of hatchery-reared smolts, in most instances released to provide additional harvest in the marine boat sport fisheries, as well as freshwater and marine shoreline fisheries. Local Division of Sport Fish offices can furnish the particulars on local terminal king salmon fisheries.

Mature king salmon in terminal areas can be taken on large lures (such as Pixees, Krocodiles, and buzz-bombs), and they will also take flies.



Bottomfish

Halibut, Pacific cod, and rockfish are usually taken in the period from May through September, although they're available all year long. These species tend to move into shallow water in warmer summer months and to overwinter in deeper waters, usually beyond reach of sport anglers. Most bottom fishing effort is targeted toward halibut.

Bottom fishing tackle consists of a powerful rod and a strong reel capable of holding at least 200 yards of 60-pound test or heavier line. Leader material should be either wire or monofilament in the 100-pound-test class. Shark hooks, flying gaffs, or harpoons are often used to land halibut. At least one of these items is necessary to land really large halibut.

Both halibut and cod are taken on bait and jigs. Anglers who fish for rockfish normally use smaller baits or jigs. The usual bait is herring or other fish, but chrome or colored, weighted jigs are also used.

(Anglers should be aware that the only parts of a *sport-caught fish*—fish for which there is a bag limit—that may be used for bait are the head, fins, and viscera.)

A depth finder is a necessity for dependable bottom fishing. The best bottom fishing is usually found on underwater ledges, reefs, or in channels, where depths can range from 5 to 40 fathoms.



## *Trout and Char*

The Juneau and Haines road systems, as well as more remote parts of northern Southeast, furnish extensive access to both shoreline and freshwater fishing opportunities for Dolly Varden—one of the region’s most important sport fish species. Fishing begins for the most part in April and early May, when Dollies begin moving to salt water from overwintering lakes. During the next several months, these fish will move along marine shoreline areas and will be entering the lower reaches of many streams. By mid-

to late summer they are returning to their natal streams for spawning later in fall.

Sea-run cutthroat trout have a similar life history, except that they spawn in spring. The abundance of sea-run cutthroat trout is low, compared to sea-run Dolly Varden, and bag and possession limits, as well as size limits are correspondingly more restrictive.

For both Dollies and sea-run cutthroat, good shoreline areas to try are near stream mouths or where

there are rocky outcrops. Light to medium weight spinning gear is most commonly used for shoreline fishing. Lures such as Pixees, Krocodiles, Hotrods, and Dare-devils work well, both in salt water and fresh water.

Northern Southeast has rather limited steelhead trout fishing opportunities. There are runs of spring steelhead, but most are in remote locations, and run sizes are small. In general, peak steelhead trout fishing in northern Southeast streams is from early to mid-May.

Juneau roadside steelhead trout are confined primarily to Peterson Creek, which empties into Peterson Lagoon near Amalga Harbor. Past research indicates that the total escapement of steelhead into this system approaches 200 adults, but there are likely fewer than half this number in the stream at any one time, and the stream is very small and not easy to fish. Landlocked king or coho salmon are available all year long at Twin Lakes on the Juneau road system. These fish can be taken on bait, lures, or flies during the summer and through winter ice.

## *Remote, Fly-in Lakes*

There are approximately 10 lakes in northern Southeast that are accessible only by float plane—or also, in some instances, by boat and then trail—and which have one or more U.S. Forest Service recreational cabins onsite. These cabins provide excellent opportunities for people to fish and experience wilderness, but have the comfort of the cabin and stove to get dry and warm after a day of play in the rain. These cabins are very popular, and reservations must be booked well in advance of the planned stay.

Photo by Mark Schwan



*Turner Lake cabin, in northern Southeast Alaska.*

Most of these lakes are landlocked, containing resident populations of cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, and kokanee. The combination of cutthroat trout and kokanee has resulted in some large, trophy-sized cutthroat, and these lakes have been popular fishing destinations for years.

Boats are available at lakes with Forest Service cabins, and in general they are in good condition, but sometimes they can be in poor shape. When fishing a lake with no boats on-site, take an inflatable boat or float tube—it will greatly increase your chances for a successful outing.

In recent years there were increasing effort but declining harvests of cutthroat trout throughout most of Southeast Alaska, and the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted more restrictive regulations aimed at preserving cutthroat trout as well as steelhead populations.

Anglers need to refer to the current Alaska sport fishing

regulations summary (more on page 22) to make sure they know existing bag limits, size restrictions, and bait use restrictions before they fish.

As a general rule, bait cannot be used in fresh water except from mid-September through mid-November, but most remote lakes with cabins in the northern Southeast management area are restricted year-round to artificial lures. The general restriction on the use of bait is aimed at reducing the hook-and-release mortality rates for cutthroat and steelhead trout.

## *Fly Fishing*

Fly rods in the 8 to 10 weight class, usually 8 feet or longer, are used for salt-water salmon fishing. Both floating and sinking lines are used, sometimes with shooting heads. Coho flies, maribous, hair-wing tarpon flies, and imitations of small bait fish work well.

Eight-weight class rods are fine for steelhead, and 5–6-weight gear is a good choice for Dolly Varden and trout. Egg imitation patterns work well for Dolly Varden, whereas a variety of attracting patterns or nymph patterns are normally best for trout.

## *Packaging Your Catch for Shipment*

Fish can be frozen and packed in waxed 40- or 70-pound fish boxes for shipment. Fish packed in this way are good for several hours of air travel. Charter boat operators and guides will usually pack your catch for shipment or deliver them to a processor for packaging.

Anglers can also have their catch frozen and packaged at meat departments in local grocery stores or cold storage facilities. There are local businesses that specialize in smoking, freezing or packaging fish for shipment.

## *Catch-and-release Fishing*

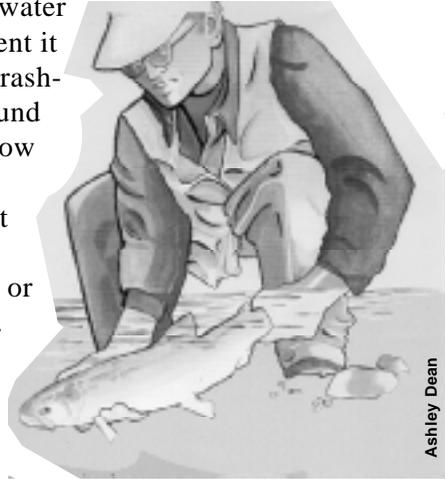
If you've planned your trip well and have put in some time fishing, you are probably catching fish. If you don't intend to keep a fish you catch, or can't keep it because of our regulations, let it go in the manner described below. Because there are minimum size requirements for king salmon and cutthroat, rainbow, and steelhead trout harvested in essentially all Southeast waters,

*cont'd . . .*

catch-and-release fishing is a critical element in our fisheries. Proper techniques must be used, in order to keep mortality rates of released fish to a minimum:

- Do not net fish that you plan to release.
- If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the leader off as close as possible to the fish and leave the hook in.
- If the fish is hooked in the outer parts of its mouth, use needle-nose pliers to dislodge hook. (If you know ahead of time you will be releasing the fish you catch, bend down the barbs on your hooks to facilitate removal.)
- If you plan to release a fish, there is no need to take it from the water. If you're fishing at a shoreline, release your fish in

deeper water to prevent it from thrashing around in shallow water where it may be bruised or injured.



**TIP** ➤ Visiting anglers often practice catch-and-release for the first few days of their fishing trip and will selectively keep fish at the end of the trip to take home. This is also a good way to insure the fish you do take with you are in the best condition when you reach home.

## *Juneau Roadside Sport Fishing Regulations*

Anglers should obtain a current year's ADF&G sport fishing regulations summary booklet and read it before going fishing—this is particularly important in the Juneau area.

Given Juneau's relatively large population, the potential exists for overharvesting local fish resources. Several small roadside streams have been closed to sport fishing altogether, some others closed to salmon fishing, and several areas closed to Dolly Varden fishing.

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More restrictive bag and possession limits are in effect for several species as well. (There is more on page 22 about Southeast Alaska sport fishing regulations and emergency orders.)

Here is a brief rundown of Juneau roadside bag and possession limits and size requirements, which differ from regional regulations.

### In fresh water:

## Juneau

- Coho salmon 16 inches or longer—2 per day and in possession.
- Sockeye salmon 16 inches or longer—1 per day and in possession; annual limit of 5 sockeye salmon; a harvest record is required.
- Dolly Varden—2 per day and in possession.
- Cutthroat trout—14-inch minimum size.

### In salt water:

- Dolly Varden—2 per day and in possession, in all salt waters adjacent to the Juneau City and Borough road system to a line  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile offshore.

## Haines Roadside Regulations

The Haines area supports some of the most intensive freshwater recreational fisheries in Southeast Alaska. Bag and possession limits have been reduced for coho salmon and Dolly Varden in certain drainages. It is important that anglers know the regulations—and make sure not to confuse the Chilkat and Chilkoot rivers.

### In fresh water:

## Haines

- Coho salmon 16 inches or longer:
  - 3 per day and 6 in possession in the *Chilkat* River drainage;
  - 2 per day and 2 in possession in the *Chilkoot* Lake and River (below the lake).
- All other salmon species—in *Chilkoot* Lake and River (below the lake) the possession limit is equal to the daily bag limit.
- Dolly Varden—2 per day and 2 in possession in the *Chilkoot* Lake and River drainage.