

Idaho Fish & Game News

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Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days Celebrates 15 Years

This September, Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days will celebrate 15 years at the MK Nature Center in Boise.

During this time, 30,000 elementary students have participated in hands-on activities to learn about the biology, history, and the economic and cultural significance of salmon and steelhead in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest.

The event was inspired by concern over the plight of Idaho's Chinook salmon and steelhead. With these fish facing possible extinction, the founders of Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days Inc. wanted to find a way to raise awareness about these incredible fish. The result was the first Salmon and Steelhead Days held in 1997.

The goal of the event continues to be increasing public awareness and appreciation of the importance of Idaho's anadromous fishes, including salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey and white sturgeon.

Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days Inc. also hopes to foster support for salmon recovery and restoration so all Idahoans can once again enjoy these magnificent fish.

Salmon and Steelhead Days provides students, teachers and parent chaperones with a quality outdoor conservation education event that emphasizes fun, hands-on learning. Students don't just hear about aquatic insects that feed salmon, they get to wade into the river to find and observe

aquatic insects. They get up-close to a dead salmon to see how decomposers return nutrients in the salmon to a stream. They examine and learn about traditional Nez Perce fishing equipment from a tribal elder.

It is this active participation that organizers feel is critical to helping students understand and appreciate Idaho's salmon and steelhead.



Salmon and Steelhead Days activities teaches Idaho fifth-graders about stream ecology and the importance of clean water.

During three very busy days, volunteers guide a total of over 2,000 fifth-grade students through five stations. Each station focuses on an element of the biological, cultural, and historic importance of salmon and steelhead.

One evening is set aside for a

salmon barbecue open to the public along with some of the educational activities offered to students. Some of these students often return with their parents to the evening barbecue to share their experiences with their family.

Idaho Salmon and Steelhead Days is a collaborative effort of state and federal agencies, tribal representatives, private groups, and interested individuals.

Together, they and an army of volunteers will work with nearly 2,300 students over the course of this year's event, helping them discover the wonders of Idaho's salmon and steelhead.

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Salmon & Steelhead Day Activities Incorporate Learning and Fun in Five Stations



Salmon Culture

Elmer Crow's presentation on the importance of salmon and other creatures to Idaho's American Indians is absolutely spellbinding. Elmer is a Nez Perce Elder who holds the audience's attention as he talks about salmon, steelhead, lamprey, sturgeon and more. He displays and demonstrates the use of his personal traditional hunting and fishing equipment, which is as beautiful as it is fascinating.



Gyotaku - Japanese Fish Printing

Children learn about fish anatomy through art. "Gyotaku," originally used to record size and species in the catch of Japanese fishermen, has become an art form. Students use their creativity and artistic skills to make a beautiful fish print to take home by painting a real fish, then transferring the "stencil" to paper.



Class in the Creek

This is arguably the most popular of the day's activities. Students, teachers and parents gain first hand knowledge of aquatic ecology by "playing" in the Boise River. Biologists guide students as they discover what lives in "their" river, and why clean, cold rivers are essential to salmon and the rest of us.



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Salmon Maze - Salmon Life History

At the salmon maze, students learn the fascinating biology of anadromous fishes – species that hatch from eggs in freshwater, migrate to the ocean as juveniles, and then return to their home waters as adults to spawn. They also learn about the current status of salmon and steelhead populations in Idaho.

Ecology - All Things are Connected

This activity emphasizes the important connections between land and aquatic habitats. Trees and other riparian vegetation stabilize stream banks, keep water cool and provide food and cover for fish and wildlife. Salmon play the key role in transporting nutrients for plants and animals from the ocean back to Idaho. Salmon return these nutrients to some of Idaho’s most remote locations.



Idaho Fish and Game Policy

Idaho wildlife management policy is set by seven volunteer commissioners. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission bases policy decisions on research and recommendations by the professional staff of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and with input from the governor’s office, the state Legislature, hunters, anglers and the public.

Importance of Salmon and Steelhead Fishing to Idaho Today

Fishing brings about \$300 million into the Idaho economy. Salmon and steelhead fishing account for a substantial portion of that, and it is particularly important in many rural communities.

During 2010, anglers spent 307,000 hours to catch 18,453 adult and 1,748 jack spring and summer Chinook salmon. Anglers also landed 701 adult and 284 jack fall Chinook. Anglers spent 145,750 angler days to catch 62,390 steelhead during the spring season, and 159,628 days to harvest 35,195 steelhead in the fall season.

In 2010, Idaho Fish and Game sold more than 32,000 salmon permits and about 55,000 steelhead permits to resident anglers. Fish and Game sold about 2,000 salmon permits and about 5,000 steelhead permits, as well as about 12,000 three-day salmon/steelhead permits to nonresident anglers.



F&G Launches Online Marketing Effort Aimed at Hunters and Anglers

September is the time of year when anglers turn their attention to steelhead.

With an estimated 141,000 hatchery steelhead expected to return to Idaho's Snake, Clearwater and Salmon rivers, anglers are planning when and where to go fishing.

Few are more eager than Gary Sundvik from Idaho pictured at right.

Sundvik is one of a handful of anglers featured on special web pages highlighting different hunting and fishing opportunities in Idaho.

The "I Hunt Idaho!" and "I Fish Idaho!" web pages will provide information about one activity, which can help connect a hunter and angler with what they may need and want to know about it.

For information on steelhead fishing in Idaho check out <http://idahofishandgame.idaho.gov/i/fishidaho>. New steelhead anglers can find what they need to get started, and experienced steelhead fishermen will find news on steelhead



returns and fishing. Other features will be added to the page as the steelhead season progresses.

Similar pages on other hunting and fishing opportunities will follow the seasons.

Idaho Steelhead Come in Three "Sizes:" A, B and Bigger

Steelhead are a type of rainbow trout that spawn in freshwater streams, migrate to the ocean to grow, and return to fresh water as adults. They are common to the Clearwater, Snake and Salmon rivers.

Idaho's steelhead are often classified into two groups, A-run and B-run, based on their size and ocean life history.

Idaho's A-run steelhead are usually found in the Snake and Salmon rivers. They return from the ocean earlier in the year, usually June through August, after spending one year in the ocean. They typically weigh 4 to 6 pounds and are generally 23 to 26 inches in length.

The B-run steelhead most often return to the Clearwater River, but some return to tributaries in the Salmon River. These fish usually spend two years in the ocean, and start their migration to Idaho later in the summer or fall of the year, usually late August or September. Because of the additional time in the ocean, they return as much bigger fish. Average B-run steelhead weigh between 10 and 13 pounds and are 31 to 34 inches long.

Steelhead grow larger still when they spend a third year in the ocean before returning to Idaho to spawn. They are usually more

than 37 inches and often weigh more than 20 pounds.

The Idaho state record steelhead was more than 30 pounds and was caught in the Clearwater River in 1973.

Steelhead return in the fall and spawn in streams from mid-April to late June. The female selects a place in a riffle below a pool to dig a redd (nest) in gravel or cobble, depending on the size of the fish. She displaces the gravel with her body and tail, and the male fertilizes the eggs as they are deposited.

The eggs hatch in early to mid-summer. The young fish live in the stream and migrate to the ocean, usually after two years of rearing in the stream.

Steelhead eat insects and microscopic animals in the water or on the surface. They also feed on small fish and fish eggs. As they get larger, they will eat larger fish.

Adult steelhead holding in the river prior to spawning do not eat much, but will strike at food or lures.

They respond to a variety of angling techniques. Since they are not feeding, the angler pesters the steelhead enough to get it to strike. They're aggressive and will take a variety of bait, lures and flies. Some anglers prefer plugs, shrimp or fresh roe.