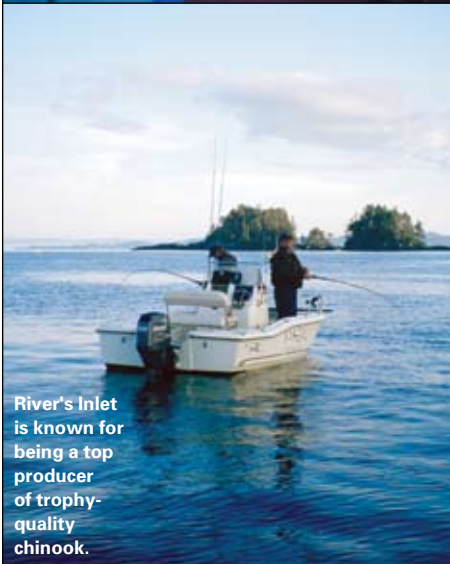
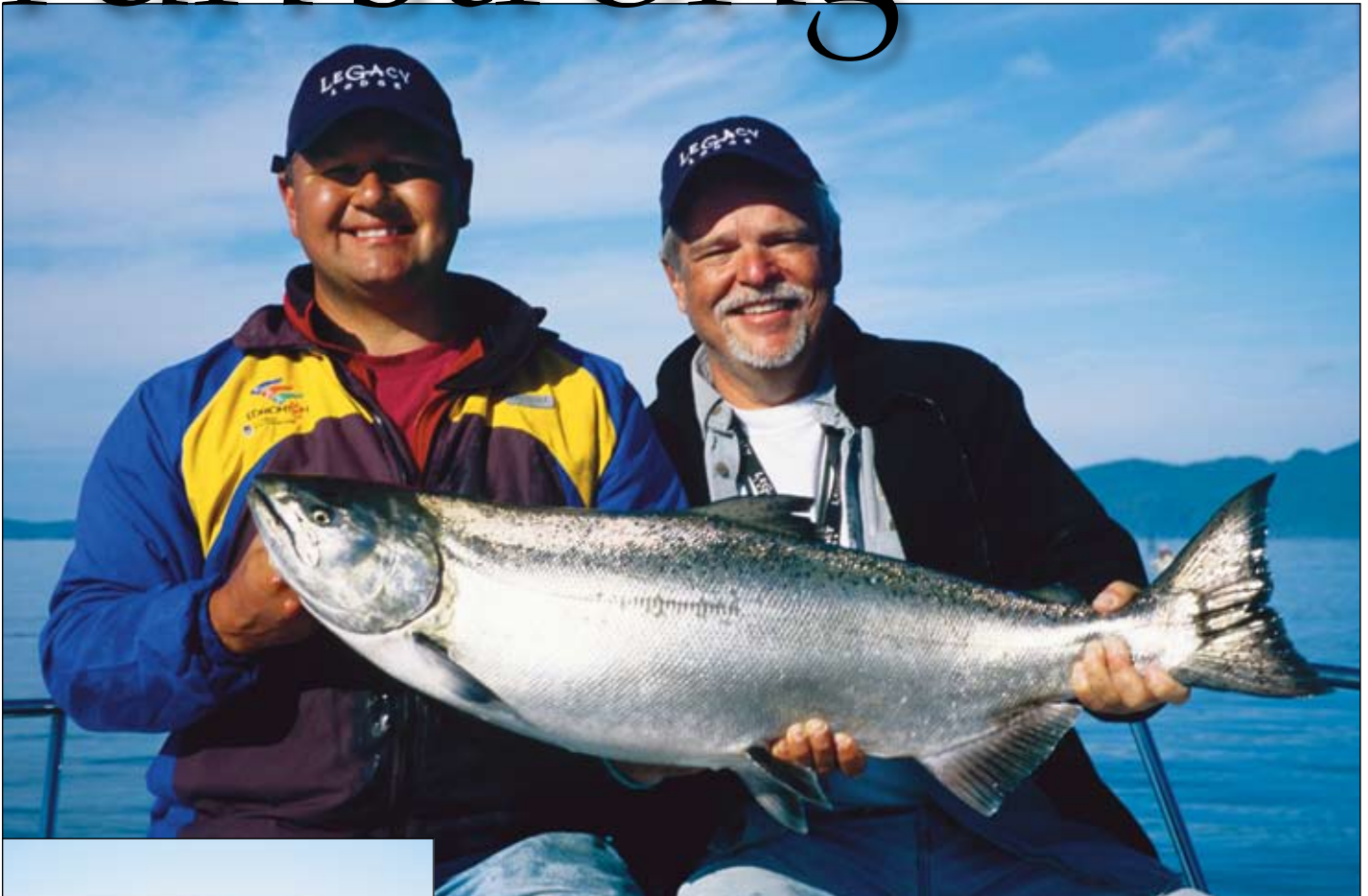


where the salmon run strong



River's Inlet is known for being a top producer of trophy-quality chinook.

FRED NOODIN 2X

If you're looking for the home of BC's largest salmon, look no further than River's Inlet
By Derek Nyrose

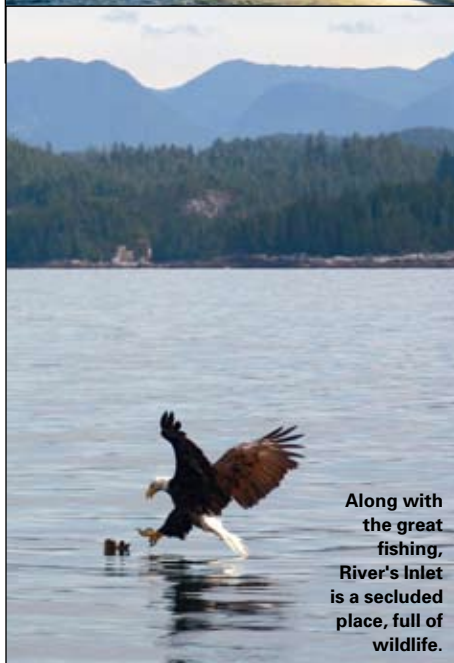
It happened mere moments after dropping our lines off Merc Point, an abutment of land named for the old Mercury hubcap nailed to a tree on the shoreline. "Back rod! Back rod!" I don't even remember who yelled it — it could even have been me — but without haste, my fishing partner jumped to the back of the boat, fed

some line and set the hook. It was my turn up to bat, so he passed off the rod and the fight began. After a short battle, a chinook was alongside the boat.

But as quickly as the excitement started, it was over — the fish rolled, spat the hook and swam off into the deep, a scene heartbreaking to any angler.



First bite is often before the first light, so get up early if you want to land a lunker.



Along with the great fishing, River's Inlet is a secluded place, full of wildlife.

Abundant Waters

We were fishing out of Legacy Lodge in Rivers Inlet, a deep glacial fiord carved into BC's central coast. Neither my friend, Fred Noddin, nor I had fished the area before, and we were amazed by not only the hot fishing, but the landscape that surrounded us as well as the porpoises, humpback whales, orcas and marine birds, that inhabited it.

Rivers Inlet is best known for the trophy chinook salmon that pass by on their way back to their spawning streams — but as we found on our trip, chinook aren't the only fish the region is rich with. With plenty of coho and even a good supply of halibut, we had more than enough action to keep us busy while hunting for those big chinook.

Before this trip, I was under the mistaken impression that River's Inlet is a fishery that is just too crowded. This can be the case at some of the more famous areas, like "The Wall" or "The Head," but heading out from our base at Legacy Lodge, located at the mouth of the inlet, solitude is as easy to find as are all five species of Pacific salmon and the leviathan halibut beneath them.

Going Deep

Arriving in River's Inlet by float plane late in the afternoon, we spent the first evening

relaxing, and taking in what the lodge offers. Like many other fishermen, when I go on a trip I can't wait to get out on the water, but it's just as important to get to know your fellow anglers, enjoy the lodge and most importantly recharge for the day ahead. Arriving in the afternoon has another purpose though — with fog being a constant in River's Inlet, it's best to arrive later in the day to reduce the chance of your flight being delayed by bad weather.

The next morning couldn't come fast enough, and we were soon dropping our lines off Merc Point, under the rising sun. It didn't take long until Fred and I had twins on the line, coho salmon weighing about 10 pounds — a typical first-light bite for River's Inlet. After catching and releasing numerous other coho, I also landed a nice 18-pound chinook, with only nine pulls of line out! Not the monster I was hunting for, by local standards, but a respectable fish nonetheless.

After constant persuading from Fred, we finally decided to head over to Swan Rocks, a spot known for halibut. I didn't want to stop salmon fishing for even a moment, but who doesn't love halibut? As Mick Heath, owner and operator of Legacy Lodge, puts it: it's big game hunting in these waters — I wanted to catch that fish of a lifetime.

It didn't take long for us to get rigged up and get our gear to the bottom, and not long after, I had a hit. *Tug, tug, tug*, the telltale sign of a hali. I let the fish take some line and then I drove the hook home. After a short battle I had a nice 20-pound halibut to the boat — perfect table fare. Who would have thought we would come to a place where 99 per cent of the anglers target trophy springs to chase bottomfish? That's the beauty of River's Inlet. Within minutes of the lodge, we had our choice of targeting salmon or halibut. We even got to enjoy the company of a pod of porpoises that played around our boat as we fished.

Salmon Seekers

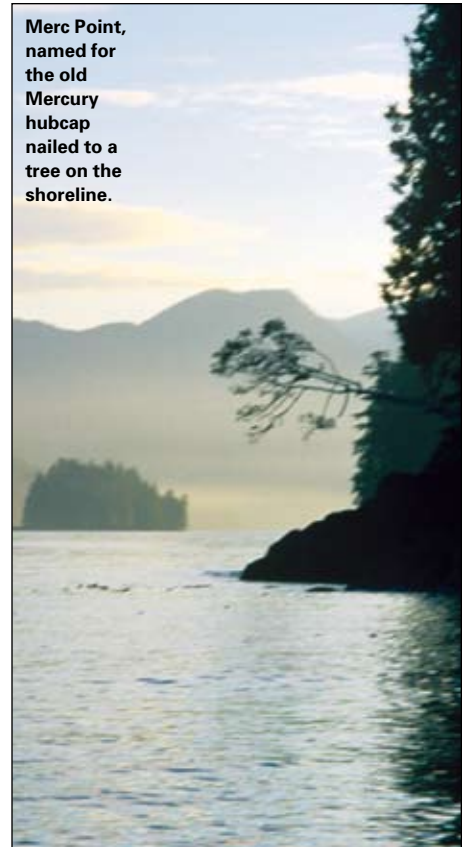
As the end of our trip drew near, we got the opportunity to fish with Mick — and we jumped at the chance to get an expert lesson in Rivers Inlet's fishery. The next morning, though, Fred and I woke to find we had slept in — and figured we had missed the opportunity to head out with the lodge's owner. But like the nice guy he is, Mick was waiting at the dock for us, ready to go, even though most of the other anglers had headed out earlier.

As Mick Heath, owner and operator of Legacy Lodge, puts it: it's big game hunting in these waters

Not only is River's Inlet renowned for having big salmon, but there are a lot of feisty coho too, so even if you're not finding tyees, you'll still find plenty of action.



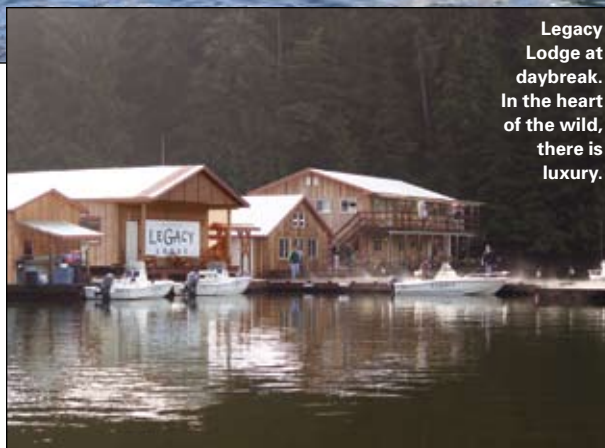
Merc Point, named for the old Mercury hubcap nailed to a tree on the shoreline.



FRED NODDIN

A renowned nearby fishing spot, Cranstown, had produced four tyees (chinook over 30 pounds) the previous day, but Mick had a feeling that Merc Point would pay off for us even better than before. We headed off, soon pulling up to that familiar hubcap, and put our lines out. Looking around, Fred and I got to take in the real beauty of our surroundings. There was a slight fog coming off the water and with the sun just coming up, the landscape had taken on a golden hue.

After working Merc Point for the first part of the morning, Mick followed his theory that bigger fish move off structure as the sun comes up, and moved us further offshore. Before I knew it, I was yelling to Fred that his rod had a hit. He grabbed his rod from the holder, let some line out, and waited patiently for the fish to take the bait. The rod tip bounced and he set the hook. It was the fish we were hoping for, we could tell from the long deep runs and the bulldogging that only a big spring can do. This is what we came here for; we had finally hunted down a big spring. Fred did every-



Legacy Lodge at daybreak. In the heart of the wild, there is luxury.

thing right and with Mick at the helm; this fish didn't have a chance. We soon had a beautiful chinook in the boat.

Excited, Fred wanted to weigh it immediately. We knew it was big — but was it a trophy for Rivers Inlet? Almost — the scale read 28 pounds. It didn't matter, though, as Fred — who lives in Edmonton — had never caught a Pacific salmon that size before.

Nearby, another boat carrying a father and son team drifted by. The young son yelled out, "Nice fish, how big do you think it is?" Fred proudly called back, "Twenty-eight pounds!"

As they trolled out of earshot the kid yelled back, "Good luck, but I guess you don't need it." With all the fish in River's Inlet, truer words were never spoken. 🐟

If You Go

Legacy Lodge has the perfect location, Darby Channel, the mouth of River's Inlet, which allows you to head the fish off at the pass as they come in to spawn. Year after year this area produces more large salmon than almost anywhere else in BC — with chinook sometimes topping 60 pounds.

The lodge came to be as part of the vision of owner/operator Mick Heath. With more than 20 years of experience on coastal waters from Oregon to Alaska, he found Rivers Inlet as a diamond in the rough. Mick wanted to share this experience with others and with that, Legacy Lodge became a reality.

www.legacylodge.com;
1.877.347.4534