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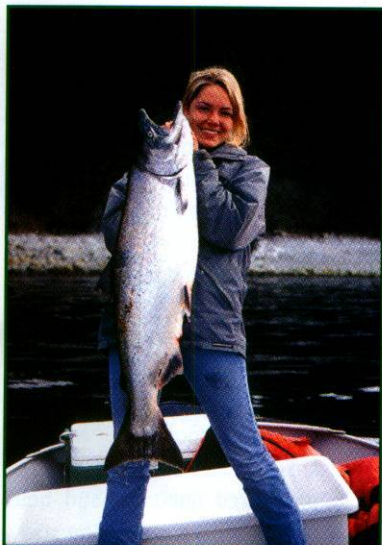
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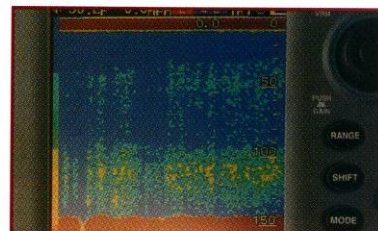
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*Jacqueliën Mansker
with a nice king
salmon.*
Mike Mansker photo

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Salmon Trout Steelheader (ISSN 0029-3431) is published six times per year (bimonthly); \$4.95 per copy; \$19.95 for one year; \$34.95 for two years. Add \$5.00 per year for Canadian and foreign subscriptions. Published by Frank Amato Publications Inc., 4040 SE Wister, Portland, Oregon 97222, (503) 653-8108. Periodicals postage paid at Grand Forks, North Dakota and additional offices (USPS 934-780). Reprint rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to Salmon Trout Steelheader, P.O. Box 82112, Portland, Oregon 97282.

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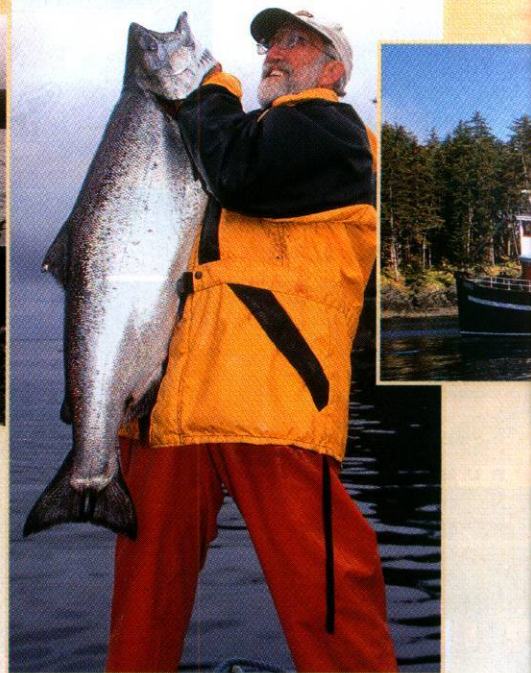
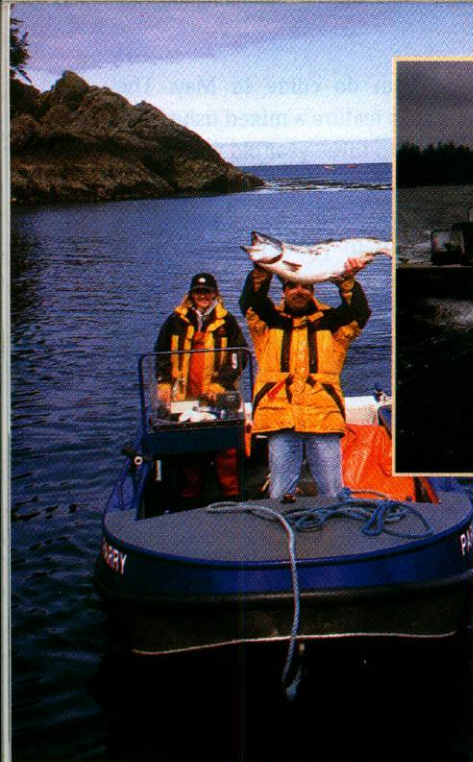
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Left: Christian and Christine Willard return to the Parry with a large tye caught at Coho Point.

Above: Fishing boats in tow behind the Parry while crossing Dixon Entrance.

Right: Dave Vedder hoists his 41-pound tye near Cox Island.

Searching for Salmon

IN THE NORTHERN QUEEN CHARLOTTES

Jack W. Berryman

After centuries of isolation, British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands are being discovered by tourists and sportsmen who travel to the Islands each summer to enjoy the scenery, relaxed atmosphere, superlative fishing, and the Haida arts and culture. The "Charlottes" are a fang-shaped group of some 160 islands lying 75 nautical miles off of the west coast of mainland British Columbia north of Vancouver Island. The two largest islands are Moresby on the south end and Graham on the north end. Tiny Langara Island lies off of the northwest tip of Graham Island and is the most westerly Canadian provincial land. Masset is the largest town on Graham Island and has a major airport. On a clear day, you can look north across Dixon Entrance and see the mountain ranges of Southeast Alaska.

Much of this remote area was discovered by Spanish and English explorers in the 1770s and by 1787, British captain George Dixon had named the region "Queen Charlotte's Islands," after his ship the *Queen Charlotte*. This region is also known as "Haida Gwaii." Haida means "the people," and is the name of the native inhabitants. "Haida Gwaii" means "the home of the Haida." Much of the land is under their jurisdiction and permits are needed to visit some of their sites.

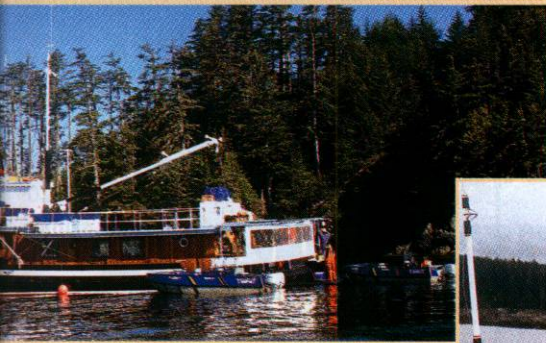
For fishermen, these remote and "hard to get to" lands are surrounded by some of the richest and most productive waters on the West Coast. Salmon migrate through here as they travel up and down the coast from Washington and Oregon, British Columbia, and Alaska. Bottomfish are also abundant, with some of the largest lingcod and halibut caught here annually. Large schools of rockfish and various types of whales frequent the area as well. Massive schools of herring and anchovy attract and hold the fish for weeks at a time.

Fishing this area on your own in a private boat is almost impossible. The logistics of trailering a boat to the region would be a nightmare. But, even if you did have access to a boat, the distances from a port or a town to the best fishing grounds are practically insurmountable. In addition, the weather in this region, even in the summer, can be treacherous. High winds, strong tides, and frequent fog can be killers.

Accordingly, several land-based lodges are located in Masset, Naden Harbour, and on Langara Island. Guests travel to these outposts via boat, floatplane, or helicopter and generally visit for three to four days. Almost all of the fishing is guided. Another option to fish these pristine waters is on board one of the two tugboats owned and operated by Westwind Tugboat Adventures, based in Burnaby, British Columbia. Their motto is "follow the fish."

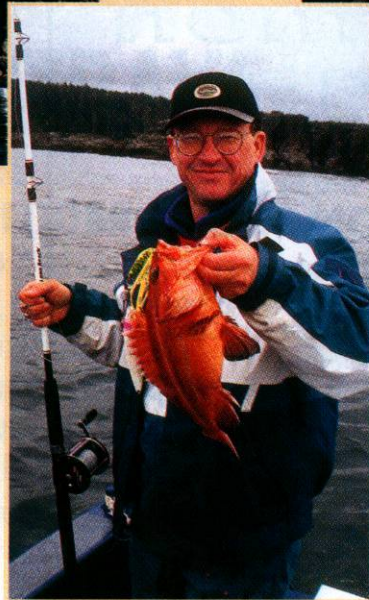
The two 1941 heritage tugs, the *Parry* and the *Union Jack*, have been extensively rebuilt for luxury cruising and provide deluxe accommodations for eight to twelve guests. Trips are a week long on these two 85 foot vessels, each equipped with two-berth cabins, several bathrooms, and a cozy lounge with leather sofas, CD player, and VCR. All tackle, licenses, floater coats, raingear, boots, and bait are provided for anglers. Their new 18-foot aluminum catamaran-style boats are fully equipped with 50 hp Honda 4-stroke outboards, fish finders, and radios. In addition, tackle boxes are filled with the necessary swivels, hooks, jigs, etc. Each tug has its own captain, chef, hostess, deckhand, engineer, and fishmaster.

Westwind Tugboat Adventures began in 1974 and their expert personnel really know the waters from Langara Island down through the "Inside Passage" to Bella Bella. They are also knowledgeable about the Prince Rupert region. Generally, May



Above: The Parry at anchor in Dibrell Bay on the Northeast corner of Langara Island.

“For fishermen, these remote and hard-to-get-to lands are surrounded by some of the richest and most productive waters on the West Coast.”



Left: Jack Berryman with one of a variety of bottomfish available in the Queen Charlottes.

Above: Wesley Vowels, a guest on the Parry from Kansas, admires the morning's catch of chinook salmon.

Right: Three carved red cedar mortuary poles at Kiusta, an abandoned Haida village on the northwest tip of Graham Island.



and June are spent around Langara Island, July around Prince Rupert, and August and September near Bella Bella, because they literally “follow the fish.” Each tug tows its fishing skiffs behind and anchors in protected bays near the best fishing grounds. In most cases, the only other boats you will see fishing will be those from your own ship.

Each guest on either of the two tugs is pampered for a week. Fabulous food, incredible scenery, and sensational fishing is the rule, rather than the exception. At various times, you may have gray and humpback whales, porpoise, eagles, or orcas as your traveling companions. There is also time set aside to go ashore hiking or beachcombing, putting out crab traps, or digging clams. Overall, you get to relax in a comfortable shipboard atmosphere, yet because of the tug's mobility, get to anchor in picturesque coves and travel into scenic fjords and channels to the heart of this wild territory.

Dave Vedder and I had the opportunity to fish on the *Parry* last June with Captain Mike Boskovich and his four crew members—Darron West, Codey Parker, Laura Rosengren and Ralph England. We had a 7:30 a.m. departure from Vancouver on Pacific Coastal Airlines so we spent the night before at the Delta Inn in nearby Richmond. I was able to leave my truck there for a week and they also provide a free shuttle to and from the airport. We were met at Vancouver's South Terminal by Wayne Kellet, the Public Relations Director and office manager for Westwind Tugboat Adventures. We were given hats and luggage tags and then boarded our flight to Masset where we joined the crew of the *Parry*. As we headed out of the harbor for Naden Harbour and Langara, we were briefed on our “home away from home,” given a tour of the tug, and issued licenses and fishing equipment. Our fishing boats were in tow behind us as we entered Dixon Entrance heading west. What anticipation!

The fishing reports were beginning to sound better and better as we intercepted “guide talk” on the radio near the entrance to

Naden Harbour. However, Captain Boskovich had sterling reports from Langara Island a few days earlier, so we kept motoring west. We finally anchored in Dibrell Bay, a beautiful cove situated between Andrews Point and Cohoe Point, on the northeast corner of Langara Island. These two points along with McPherson Point to the north, are probably the most productive fishing spots around the island and we literally had all three in our “backyard.” We could be fishing in minutes and could watch our companions fishing as we sat on the deck of the *Parry*. In fact, we anchored in such a great spot that one evening, Dave and I and deckhand Codey Parker, hooked and landed an 84-pound halibut as we watched the others finishing dinner through the *Parry's* side windows.

A day on board the *Parry* usually began when the generators were turned on at 5:30 a.m. Coffee, juice, tea, breakfast rolls, fruit, and cereal were ready once you got dressed. We were generally on the water by 6:00 or 6:15 for the morning bite. If you were so inclined, and most were, you could come back to the *Parry* for a breakfast/brunch that began at 10:30 and was different every day. You were free to fish again until hors d'oeuvres were ready at 4:00. A full bar with ice as well as a refrigerator stocked with beer and soda was available too. Dinner was ready by 5:00 or 6:00, depending on the fishing and the desires of the guests. Here nothing is spared. We had fresh salmon and halibut, steak, chicken, pork medallions, shrimp and much more, all accompanied by imported wines from throughout the world. You were free to fish or do whatever after dinner. The day ended for most of us at 10:00 or 10:30 when the generators were turned off.

Since both Dave and I had fished these waters before and knew their potential, we brought along several fly rods, from 7- to 9-weight, to fish for salmon and black rockfish, especially. We had great fun with the rockfish in the kelp coves and rocky points, but landed no salmon on the fly this trip. We spent most of our time motor mooching and trolling for salmon with a cut-plug herring. The salmon, almost all chinook, ranged between 15 and 23 pounds



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on a regular basis and are superbly "hot" fish at this time of their lives—especially on a single-action reel! Many salmon were released during the week, but all of the *Parry's* twelve guests kept their four kings. In all, our group boated five "tyees" (over 30 pounds) and many in the upper 20-pound range. A few chum and pink salmon were also landed.

After a few days fishing the northeast side of Langara, Mike moved the *Parry* over into Cloak Bay near Cox Island on the southeast corner. Here, we were very close to either Lacy Rock or Coneehaw Rock, both spots that Dave and I wanted to fish. We battled some pretty stiff winds on two different runs to Lacy with little luck. But, the third time was "the charm." We hit it perfect with an incoming tide pushing bait up against the rocks around Lacy. Fishmaster Darron West hooked-up in close to the rocks in about 40 feet of water and moved away with a good fish on. So, Dave and I followed his cue and almost immediately Dave was into a big fish. After a significant chase and battle, I netted what was to be the largest salmon of the trip—a 41-pound chinook.

That evening after a great day's fishing and marvelous dinner, one of the Haida watchmen took all of the *Parry* guests on shore to visit Kiusta, an abandoned Haida village. We viewed the red cedar carved mortuary poles dedicated to Chief Edenshaw, saw the remains of a longhouse, and hiked through the dense rainforest over to Lepas Bay, a beautiful and remote white sandy beach on the northwest corner of Graham Island. As we walked, the native Haida watchman discussed his past culture and explained many of their customs as well as how his ancestors lived off of this rich land for hundreds of years.

A week on a tug like the *Parry* in the midst of some of the most remote land and water in North America is indeed, "a trip of a lifetime." Visit the Westwind Tugboat Adventures website at www.tugboat-cruise.com, email them at cruise@tugboat-crusie.com, or call toll free for more information at 1-888-599-TUGS (8847). Owners Bob and Kathy Jordan would love to hear from you and always try their best to accommodate your needs. You can also call toll free 1-800-HELLOBC for a free British Columbia sport fishing planning guide or consult the website www.sport-fishing.bc.ca for additional information on British Columbia fishing. □



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