

BIRDING THE DUNGENESS WILDLIFE REFUGE

N O R T H W E S T
P A R K S & W I L D L I F E

BRITISH
COLUMBIA'S
Butterfly Worlds

*The Beautiful
Waterfalls of
Washington's
Lewis River*

May 1994 • \$2.95



NORTHWEST PARKS & WILDLIFE

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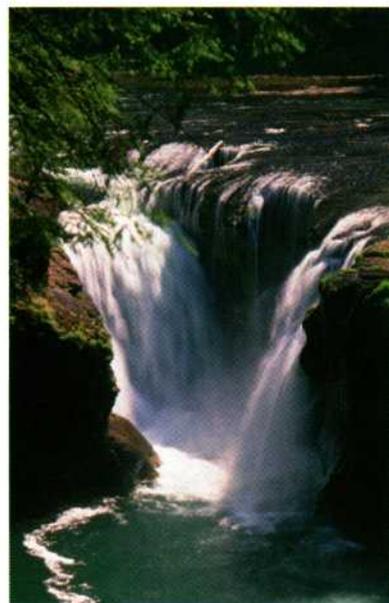
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Steelhead Fishing

With a Quinault Indian Guide

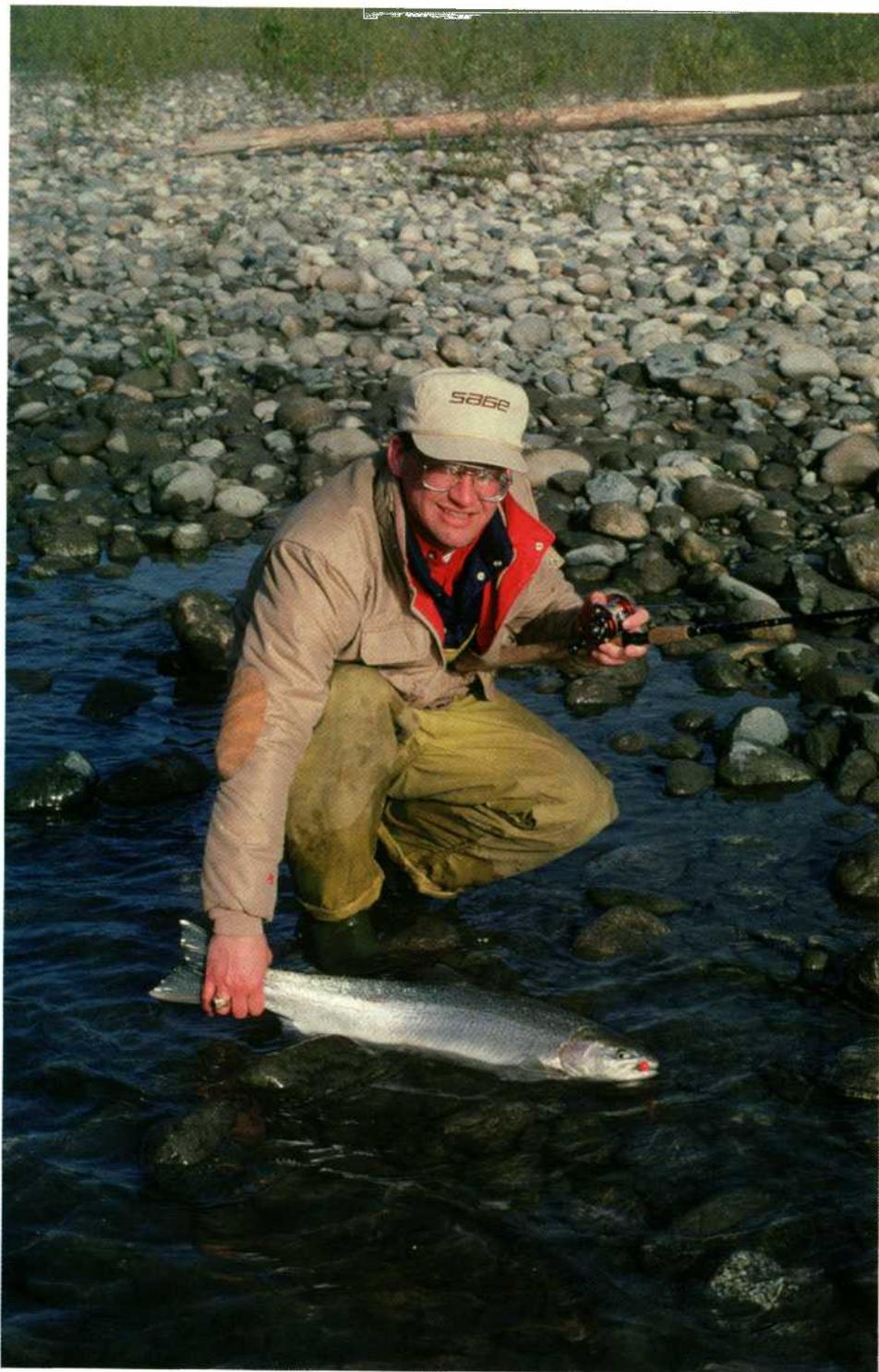
Story and Photos
by Jack W. Berryman



The elusive steelhead, prized catch of Northwest anglers and the subject of books, articles, clinics, clubs, talk shows, and much lore, can be caught by experts and novices alike in Washington's Lower Quinault River. The river can be fished only with an Indian guide since it flows in its entirety within the 220,000-acre Quinault Indian Reservation in southwest Washington.

From December through April, steelhead aficionados and crass neophytes converge on the Quinault because of the likelihood of experiencing the thrill of a lifetime. Not only can you expect to catch one or more steelhead, you can also count on seeing one of the most beautiful places on the West Coast. Flowing out of Lake Quinault at Amanda Park, the Lower Quinault travels the next 30 miles through lush stands of fir, spruce, cedar, and alder before entering the Pacific at Taholah. Elk, deer, coyotes, bears, cougars, hawks, river otters, and plenty of eagles can be seen as you drift downstream through gorgeous pools, fast runs, and sections of moderate rapids.

Your guide will navigate the river and position the boat for the best fishing spots as he reads the water. Most guides and clients prefer the drift boat because of its fishability, maneuverability, and



Author beaches a beautiful steelhead.



The splendor of the Lower Quinault River in late February.

quietness, but some guides use motor-powered craft. With these boats, you sacrifice quiet for the opportunity to run up and down the river to fish choice spots. Two people are the normal limit for each guide, but three can go provided arrangements are made in advance.

The drift boat trips begin at Amanda Park and end at one of two take-out spots about 10 to 12 miles downstream. The jet boat trips begin near the mouth of Cook Creek, home of the large Bureau of Indian Affairs' National Fish Hatchery. Many of the returning steelhead congregate here or at the outlet of Lake Quinault where they were raised in net pens, while the significant native population might head to one of several smaller tributary streams or to the Upper Quinault, which flows out of Olympic National Park before entering the lake.

In a typical year, the Quinault Fisheries Division releases several hundred thousand steelhead smolts with the hope they will return in two to four years as healthy mature adults. The typical size of Quinault River fish is eight to 13 pounds, but many reach the mid to upper teens. However, the Quinault has gained a reputation among avid steelheaders because of its larger-than-average native steelhead

WHERE TO STAY

Because you depart in the early morning, staying nearby the night before is recommended. Both the Rain Forest Resort Village and the historic Lake Quinault Lodge are within 3 miles of Amanda Park along South Shore Road. Both have spectacular views of Lake Quinault.

Rain Forest Resort Village offers fireplace cabins or rooms in its Village Inn as well as full RV facilities (31 sites, \$12 to \$15 plus tax). Rates for rooms go from \$55 to \$110 per night depending on the size of the room and extras such as a kitchen or whirlpool bath.

Lake Quinault Lodge, one of the great old National Park hotels, was built in 1926 and features a main lodge and top-rated dining room as well as a group of 36 new lakeside rooms and an annex. Prices here range from \$55 for an annex room and \$75 for a room in the main lodge to \$85 for one of the new lakeside rooms.

Rain Forest Resort Village also offers its Rain Forest Restaurant and Lounge for full-service dining and cocktails. Lake Quinault Lodge has an indoor

pool, sauna, and game room. Both facilities offer mid-week rates (Sunday through Thursday) from November through April, except holidays, so be sure to ask about reduced prices for your winter steelheading adventure.

Contact Lake Quinault Lodge at PO Box 7, Quinault, WA 98575; (206) 288-2571 or 1-800-562-6672 (Washington only).

Contact Rain Forest Resort Village at 516 South Shore Road, Quinault, WA 98575; (206) 288-2535 or 1-800-255-6936.

The following guides will pick you up at either of the lodges (all area codes are 206):

Larry Bradley, 276-4328; Clay Butler, 962-2191; Jim Bryson, 533-8087; John Bryson, 276-4740; Inky Charlie, 276-4790; Tandy Charlie, 276-4113; Phil Martin, 276-4226; Phil Martin Jr., 276-4539; Guy McMinds, 276-4335; Richard Obi, 276-4583; Frank Pickernell, 532-4525; Earl Ralston, 276-8361; Clark Reed, 288-2552; Robin Rhoades, call the tribal office at 276-8211. □

population. Every year several fish in the mid- to upper 20-pound range are caught, with some reaching the low 30s.

With inexperienced anglers on board, many guides choose to fish with diving plastic lures, referred to as pulling plugs. Light lures that dive, dart, and wobble in attractive, tantalizing, or intrusive ways (depending on your pet hypothesis for why fish strike), are let out about 8-1/2 or 9 feet on fishing rods with 12- to 20-pound test monofilament line. The skill of the guide will come into play as he works the lures around rocks, logs, and other obstacles in search of that lightning-like hit—fish on! Once your fish has been hooked, the guide will continue to row the boat to assist you in playing the fish. As the fish begins to get closer, you can decide whether to release it or keep it. If you choose the former, a quick release of the hooks with pliers without handling or netting the fish is recommended. These steelhead also make wonderful table fare and can be baked, broiled, barbecued, poached, or smoked using any recipe suitable for salmon.

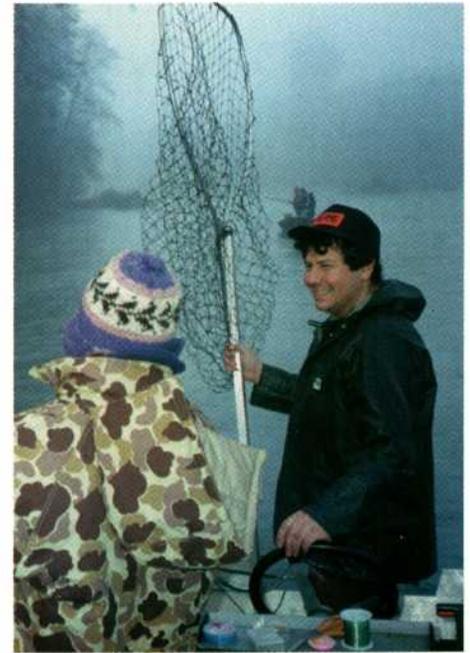
The other popular method of catching steelhead is drift fishing with a weighted line or lure that is cast out and drifted with the current near the bottom. Common lures for this type of fishing are Spin N Glos, Flash N Spins, and Corkies. Some anglers also prefer to fish with bait such as salmon or steelhead eggs and sandshrimp. With this technique, more skill and experience is necessary since casting, controlling your lure and line, and recognizing a bite or take requires more practice. It can also prove frustrating to the beginner since getting

snagged or hung up on the bottom is a fairly common occurrence. This normally means breaking your line and re-tying a new hook, lure, weight, and swivel.

Whatever fishing method you use, your guide will provide all the advice and helpful hints to be successful. Some guides will furnish all fishing equipment or will gladly plan the day around your particular gear and preferred way to fish. Many experienced anglers bring their own equipment, and a growing number challenge these wary fish with fly rods.

About a dozen guides regularly fish the Lower Quinault and can provide that added bit of experience to help you catch your first steelhead or your first steelhead over 20 pounds, the Holy Grail of steelheading. □

Jack W. Berryman is a professor of medical history in the University of Washington's School of Medicine and a freelance writer-photographer specializing in angling, the environment, and history. His articles have been published in *Trout*, *Salmon Trout Steelheader*, *British Columbia Sport Fishing*, and others. He resides in Kirkland, Washington, with his wife and teenage daughter.

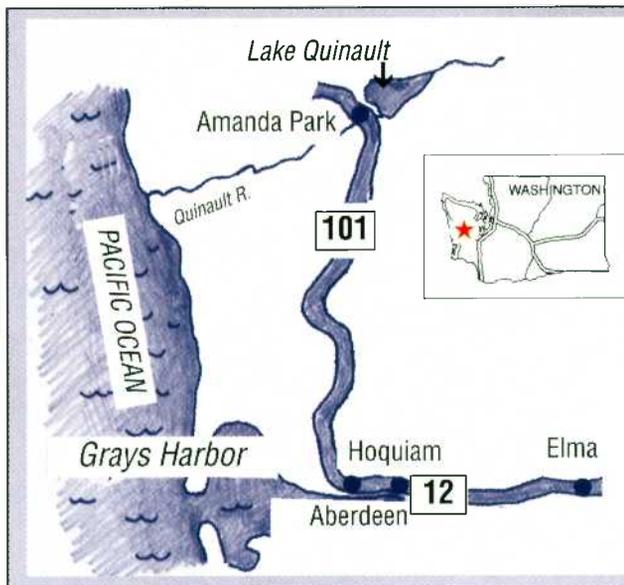


Former guide Larry Ralston awaits a happy client's steelhead with his landing net.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Guided trips usually cost from \$250 to \$300 per boat per day for two anglers and almost always begin at or before dawn and conclude around 3 in the afternoon. One of the more pleasant parts of the day is a shore lunch at one of several locations along the river. A license is not required to fish the Lower Quinault with an Indian guide, and the limit is three steelhead a day.

As with any trip to the Washington coast region in the winter, prepare for rainy, windy, and chilly weather. Dress warmly with layered clothing, and bring raingear. Boots at least 12 inches high are also recommended. A good rain hat rather than a hood will also help turn a rainy day into a pleasant outing. A camera is a must. One of many brands of waterproof boat bags (or a heavy-duty plastic trash bag) makes a handy carry-all to stow your camera, lunch, extra hat, gloves, and snacks. Even though you will be fishing during the winter, don't overlook sunglasses. They can help you see into the water better and prevent a bothersome headache often caused by the glare off the water. Also, do not forget to wear your personal flotation device for safety on the water.



Getting There

Getting to the Lower Quinault River and Lake Quinault will be just about as much fun as your fishing trip. Located about an hour north of the Grays Harbor fishing ports and a half hour east of the Olympic beaches, the area is rich with spectacular scenery and wildlife. It takes about four hours by car from Seattle or Portland and about five hours from Vancouver, B.C.

From I-5 north or south, take Exit 104 at Olympia (Aberdeen-Ocean Beaches) and proceed west to Aberdeen-Hoquiam on Washington 8 which becomes Washington 12 near Elma. From Hoquiam, go north on Highway 101 for approximately 40 miles to Amanda Park and Lake Quinault. If you are going to either of the two lodges in the area (see sidebar), turn right on South Shore Road at milepost 125 just before you get into Amanda Park and continue about 2 to 3 miles.

For additional information on the area and the Quinault Indians consult *Land of the Quinault*, edited by Pauline K. Capoeman and published by the Quinault Indian Nation. Or contact the Quinault Indian National Tribal Office at PO Box 189, Taholah, WA 98587; (206) 276-8211. Guides book well in advance, so call as far ahead as possible.