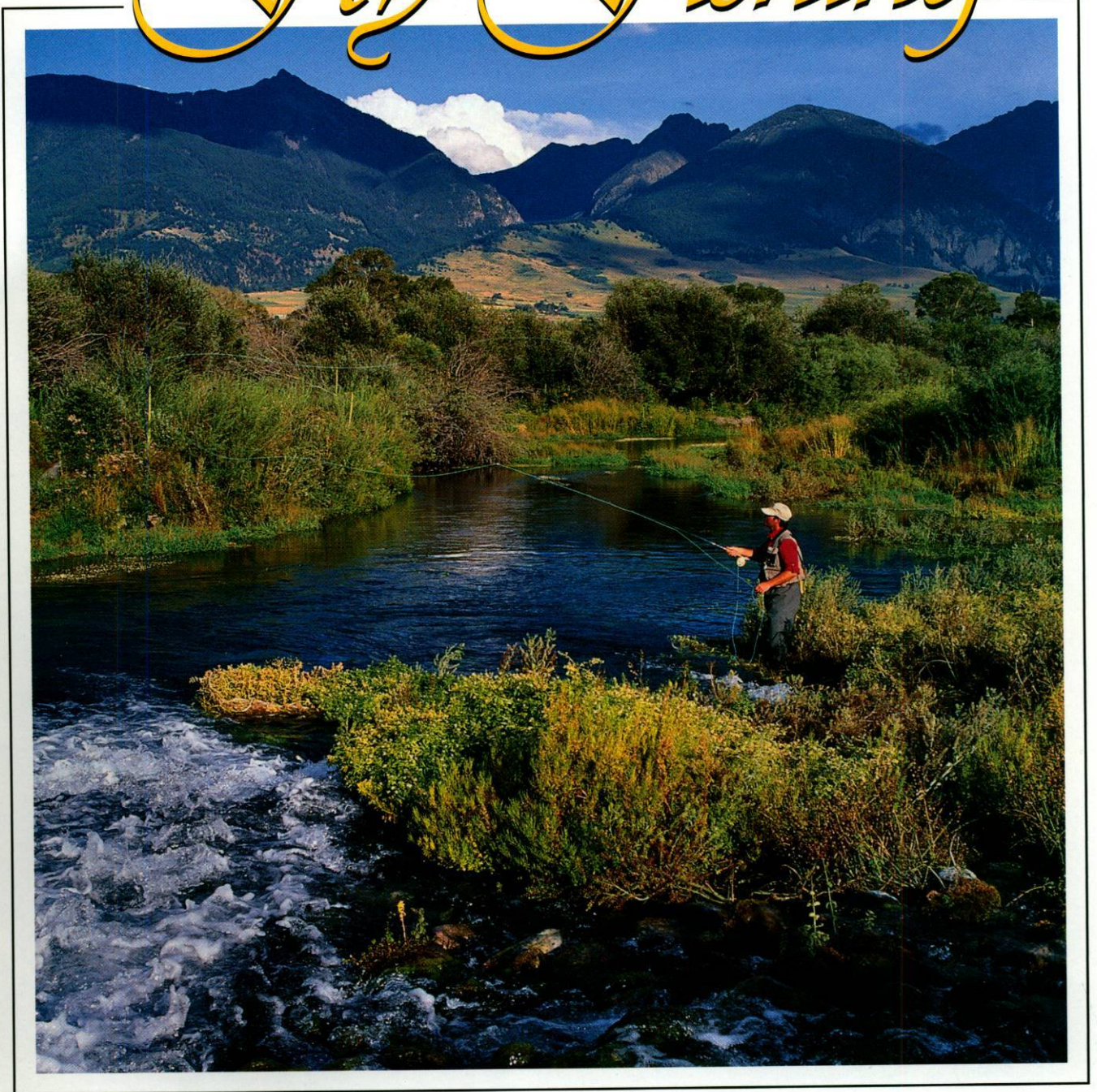


# NORTHWEST

Summer 2006

\$6.95US • \$8.95CAN

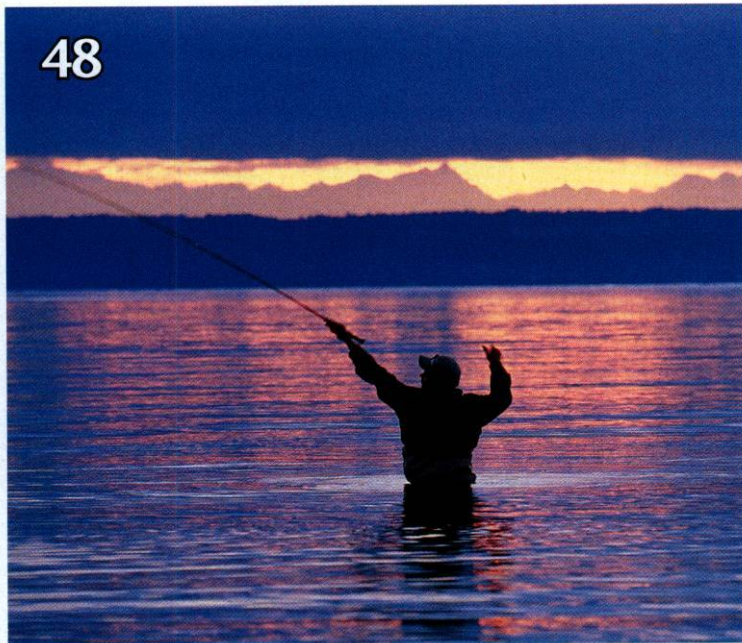
## *Fly Fishing*



Lower Sacramento, CA • 54  
Puget Sound Beaches, WA • 48  
Tasu Sound, British Columbia • 60  
Warm Springs Creek, MT • 66  
Feather River, CA • 54



62



# NORTHWEST *Fly Fishing*

Volume 8, Number 2, Summer 2006

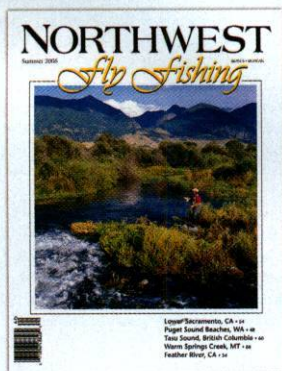
[www.matchthehatch.com](http://www.matchthehatch.com)

## Features

- 48 Puget Sound Beaches, WA**  
*Sea-runs and Salmon on Poppers*  
By Leland Miyawaki
- 54 Lower Sacramento and Feather Rivers, CA**  
*Imported Stripers on the Delta*  
By E. Donnell Thomas, Jr.
- 60 Tasu Sound, British Columbia**  
*Remote and Untapped Adventure*  
By Jack W. Berryman
- 66 Warm Springs Creek, MT**  
*Anomalous Fishing on the High Plains*  
By John Holt

## Departments

- 6 From the Editor**
- 8 Notes, News & Reviews**
- 30 Conservation**  
*2005 Coastal Cutthroat Trout Symposium* • By Doug Rose
- 32 Innovative Fly Tier**  
*Al Brunell* • By John Shewey
- 36 Pioneers & Legends**  
*Ralph O. Olson (1902-1955)* • By Jack W. Berryman
- 44 Exposure**  
*Northern Canada Pike and Lake Trout* • By Denver Bryan
- 72 Readings**  
*Extreme Angling* • By William G. Tapply
- 94 Northwest Fly Tying**  
*Carp Candy* • By Jon Luke
- 96 Fish Tales**  
*Driving 299* • By Alan Liere



Cover: An angler enjoys an early summer day on Montana's Armstrong Spring Creek.  
Photo by: R. Valentine Atkinson



Page 94 Carp Candy

# Tasu Sound, British Columbia

## Remote and Untapped Adventure

By Jack W. Berryman

**T**asu Sound is located along the southwest edge of Moresby Island, the southernmost major island of British Columbia's storied Queen Charlotte Islands. The Queen Charlottes comprise about 1,884 islands, but two, Graham to the north and Moresby to the south, account for the majority of the total landmass. Langara Island, at the top of the Queen Charlottes, is the

most living in the Sandspit area.

Tasu Sound is one of many named and unnamed channels, inlets, coves, and bays along Moresby's rugged west coast. It was originally named Baie de la Touche by French explorers in the 1700s and remained inaccessible, except by water, until the advent of floatplanes. The small village of Tasu, on Hunger Harbour, was established in 1967 to support the Tasu Mine until both were abandoned in 1983. Small amounts of iron, copper, silver, and gold were extracted from the mine site on 3,038-foot Tasu Mountain, near the south side of the sound's entrance.

Secluded since 1983, Tasu Sound became a sportfishing destination 20 years later, when West Coast Resorts chose to locate a floating lodge there. Since 2003, the Lodge at Tasu Sound has been towed into place each May and anchored at the far end of Newcombe Inlet, one of three major inlets. Here, in this remote, desolate, and wild area, sport anglers have a base of operations and a home away from home in



ALL PHOTOS BY STEVE PROBASCO

*A hefty coho salmon that fell for a Saltwater Clouser (above). Jack Berryman fishing a Tasu Sound tributary (right)*

northwesternmost point in British Columbia. All of these islands are about 75 to 100 miles past Hecate Strait, to the west of mainland British Columbia, and less than 40 miles south of the Alaska Panhandle across Dixon Entrance. They are also known as Haida Gwaii, the historic home of the Haida Indians.

Moresby Island, named after Admiral Sir Fairfax Moresby, commander in chief of the Royal Navy's Pacific Fleet in the 1850s, is located south of Skidegate Inlet and Skidegate Channel, which separate it from Graham Island. Sandspit, on the northeastern tip of Moresby, is the only settlement on the island and is the entry point for commercial air services as well as ferries from Prince Rupert and Port Hardy. The island has fewer than 18 miles of public roads and a population of about 1,000 people,

one of the more secluded areas of British Columbia. There are no other lodges, residents, or visitors here, except those associated with West Coast Resorts. The lodge is far from everything, except salmon and abundant wildlife.

Most anglers attracted to Tasu Sound visit in search of large chinook and coho salmon, halibut, and abundant bottomfish. Most visitors fish traditionally with mooched or trolled herring. However, because West Coast Resorts does not remove their lodge until late in September, when masses of coho, pink, and chum salmon begin to congregate in the sound, the lodge has begun catering to light-gear and fly anglers. The lure of catching wild salmon on a fly rod and the adventure of an untapped opportunity brought Steve Probasco and me to this area in mid-September of 2004.





*West Coast Resort's floating lodge at Tasu Sound (above). A black bear ambles along the beach near the lodge at Tasu Sound (below).*

## Logistics and the Lodge

All trips to Tasu with West Coast Resorts begin at Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal Building at 6:30 a.m. on the scheduled departure day. You register, pick up your British Columbia saltwater fishing license, and check your baggage. Then you board a chartered airplane for the 2.5-hour flight to Sandspit. Here you transfer to a helicopter and take a 20-minute scenic flight to a floating landing pad in front of the lodge. (Because of the early departure, guests should get to Vancouver the night before and stay at one of several hotels in the Richmond area that provide free shuttle service to the airport. Those traveling to Canada from another country must remember to bring a valid passport or other photo identification.) Return flights arrive back in Vancouver at about 3 p.m.

Trips are generally three-night/four-day packages with all fees based on double-occupancy rooms with en suite bathrooms. Maximum capacity is 30 guests. The lodge provides fully equipped (VHF radio, fish finder, compass, etc.) 18-foot welded-aluminum, center-console boats with 75-horsepower Mercury outboards, in addition to tackle, fuel, rain gear, rubber boots, fish processing and packaging, all meals, snacks, nonalcoholic beverages, and complimentary wine with dinners. The boats have raised step-up bows that make useful casting platforms.

The modern lodge is beautifully decorated, with a large, eager, and able staff. Amenities include an exercise room, television and movie room, hot tub, full-service bar, general store, gift shop, satellite telephone, pool table, shuffleboard, heated dry room for wet clothes, and washer and dryer. Lodge guides spend five hours each day in each boat and readily provide advice and instruction. They generally rotate

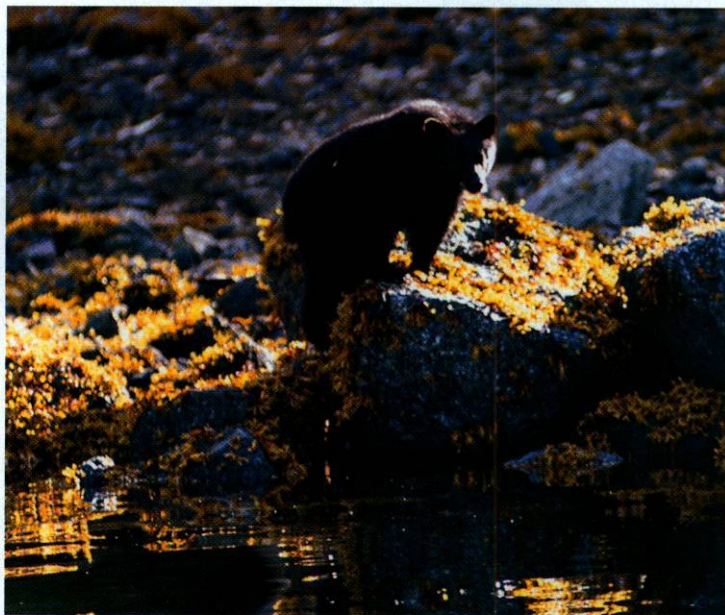
between two boats on a morning and afternoon schedule. Every guest has his or her own boat number, locker number, and fish ticket number. If you don't want to return to the lodge for lunch, you can take it with you, have a hot lunch delivered to your boat, or stop at the Outpost, a floating cabin near the entrance to Tasu Sound, where hot lunches, drinks, and a bathroom are available. Mike Coyne, lodge manager, is a seasoned professional and runs a top-flight operation.

## The Environment

Appropriately called "the Gap," the entrance to Tasu Sound is an 800-yard opening between

two mountains of rock that rise steeply from the water. Weather, tides, and waves permitting, most of the mooching and trolling is done in this area, either outside on the ocean itself or just inside in Lomgon Bay on the north or the Eagle's Nest on the south. Wind can also be a major factor here, but thanks to the sound's geography it is fairly easy to avoid. One must also be mindful of tide changes (tide schedules are posted at the lodge).

The sound features three major inlets, several islands, and a variety of bays and points that attract fish. At least eight salmon-bearing streams, some unnamed, enter the three inlets. Newcombe Inlet runs north on the left side of the sound, and the lodge is anchored at its far end. Slim Creek and Tasu Creek enter the salt water near here. Botany Inlet and Fairfax Inlet parallel Corlett Peninsula on the right side and run in a southwesterly direction. Each has two or





Jack Berryman battles a Tasu Sound-tributary salmon.

three streams and provides excellent estuary fishing. Horn Island and Reid Point are also popular trolling areas.

The area abounds in wildlife. Black bears, eagles, seals, orcas, and myriad seabirds are seen frequently. Several varieties of bottomfish are abundant, along with halibut and lingcod. At least four species of Pacific salmon come into the sound, with the chinook, or king, salmon arriving first, followed by the pinks (humpies), chums (dog salmon), and finally the silvers (cohos). Once the salmon come through the Gap, heading for their home stream, the odds of catching them on flies greatly increase. Sea-run cutthroat also begin to enter the streams in August and September.

### Equipment and Flies

Rods, lines, and fly patterns vary for the different species of salmon and bottomfish. I used a 9-weight rod for most of the fishing but beefed up to a 12-weight rod for fishing high-density shooting tapers at depths of 60 to 70 feet for halibut and lingcod. Large baitfish patterns on 20-pound tippet did the job on these saltwater heavyweights. For salmon, my favorite setup was a 22-foot Type VI sinking-tip line and a size-1 chartreuse Clouser

Minnnow. Floating lines are productive for estuaries, stream mouths, and kelp beds, and also for bucktailing or skip-fly fishing.

All of the productive fly patterns are baitfish imitations, mostly in green or blue with sufficient amounts of pearlescent Flashabou and Krystal Flash added, and dressed on size-1/0 through -4 hooks. Among the best are the Lambuth Candlefish, Harris Sand Eel, Lefty's Deceiver, Ferguson's Green and Silver, Probasco's Herring, Clouser Minnow, and Abel Anchovy. Any large-arbor fly reel with a lot of backing and a good drag will work for all species.

Bring breathable waders, wading shoes, and a rain jacket. Such attire allows you to maneuver freely in the boat and cast without being encumbered by heavy rain suits. Likewise, the waders and boots allow you to easily jump in and out of the boat to fish stream mouths and the estuary shorelines. Don't forget good polarized sunglasses and a hat.

### When and Where

For fly fishing, the later in September the better. West Coast Resorts generally devotes the last several trip

### Saltwater Clouser



PHOTO BY NORTHWEST FLY FISHING

- Hook:** TMC 800S, size 2/0
- Thread:** White
- Eyes:** Pearl dumbbell
- Head:** Pearl cement
- Wing:** White hair or synthetic, then blue Krystal Flash, then blue hair or synthetic

packages before closing to fly anglers and other light-tackle enthusiasts. For 2006, these trip packages are September 13 through 17 and September 17 through 20. However, depending on weather conditions and ocean temperatures, large numbers of salmon can begin funneling through the Gap by late August or early September.

For fly anglers, salmon fishing in Tasu Sound centers around five different kinds of habitats, each of which can be very productive when conditions are right: open water, protected bays, points of land, estuaries, and stream mouths. The large expanse of open water within the triangle formed by Horn Island, Reid Point, and Shearer Point is a great gathering place for cohos that are still actively feeding. The sound is very deep here, but the salmon are usually in the upper 10 feet of the water column and can usually be seen porpoising or chasing bait at the surface.

Small bays generally laden with kelp beds, such as Barrier Bay and Wilson Bay, at the beginning of Botany Inlet, are productive sites for chums on flood tides. Points of land, especially Reid Point and the north end of Botany Island, can be great spots on the ebb tide for silvers. The best estuary fishing occurs at the heads of each of the three major inlets. At these places, the water gradually shallows, and once you find the zone where you can just barely see the bottom, you've nailed the favorite hangout for large schools of chum, pinks, and cohos. The fish circle and mingle until they ascend their home streams. Finally, the actual stream mouths can hold hundreds of salmon that dip in and out with flood tides.

Bottomfish—several species of rockfish (genus *Sebastes*), greenling, and a few others—are most abundant near the Gap and around submerged rocks and pinnacles that are easy to locate with the fish finders in the boats. The only limitation for fly anglers is depth—there's a limit to how far down a high-density line can carry a fly when it must combat the movements of tides and currents. Accordingly, if you want to pursue bottomfish, plan your time around the slack at each tide change, with the ebb slack being the most manageable.

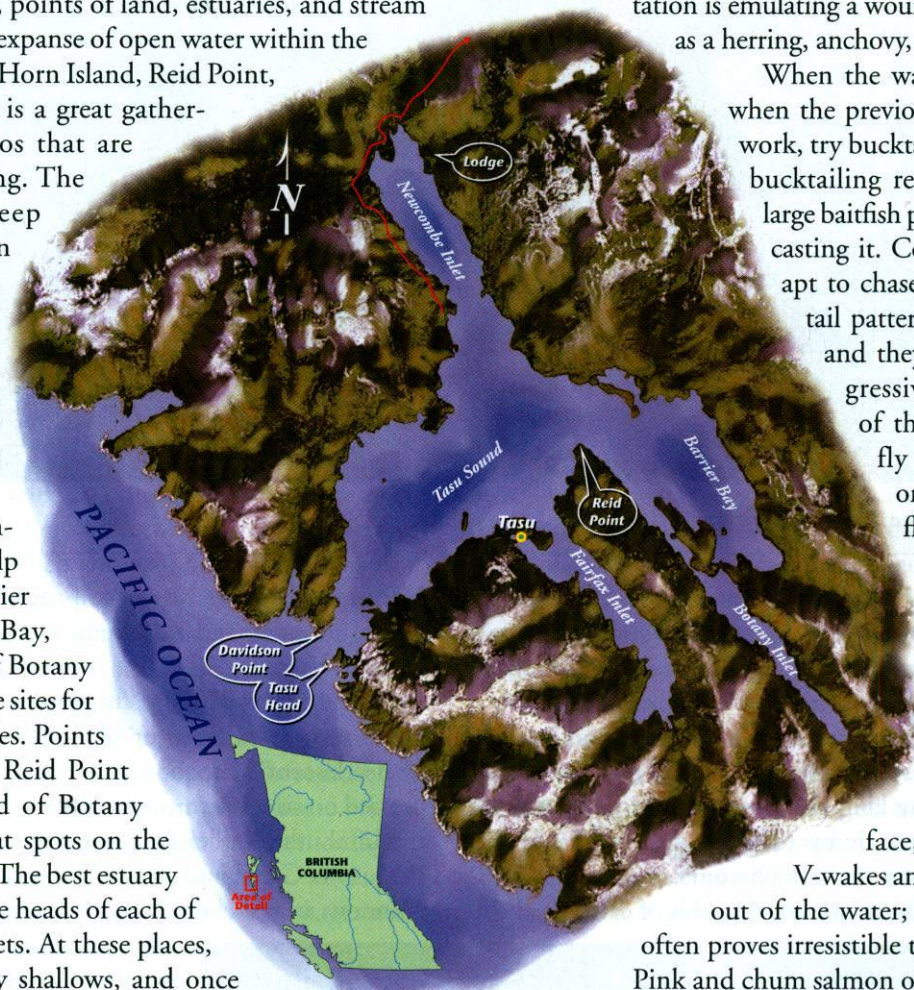
## Techniques

Fly anglers employ a variety of techniques for targeting open-water salmon. When coho are jumping and chasing bait near the surface in flat water, cast close to them using a sinking-tip line and begin the retrieve after the fly sinks just 2 to 4 feet. Retrieve the fly erratically, in 6- to 12-inch strips, and alter the speed frequently. If the fish seem spooky, cast from farther away, leading them by several yards, using a floating line and weighted fly. Remember that your presentation is emulating a wounded baitfish such as a herring, anchovy, or sand lance.

When the water is choppy or when the previous methods don't work, try bucktailing. Essentially, bucktailing refers to trolling a large baitfish pattern rather than casting it. Coho are especially apt to chase a moving buck-tail pattern on the surface, and they hit the flies aggressively. A variation of this method, skip-fly fishing, is done on a much shorter floating line, with the fly trolled just behind the prop wash of the outboard motor. By raising and lowering the rod tip with the fly on the surface, you can create V-wakes and also skip the fly out of the water; the combination often proves irresistible to coho.

Pink and chum salmon often feed on krill, as well as on crab and shrimp larvae that move with the tides, sometimes in large clouds. Krill can also be found in kelp beds in the protected bays, and when salmon are feeding in these places they generally reveal their presence by leaving dimples on the surface. Also watch for their heads, snouts, or tails to breach the surface. In these situations, present any euphausiid pattern on a long, light leader and floating line. To match different varieties of krill, carry patterns in shades of pink, orange, red, and rusty brown. A very slow retrieve is mandatory.

Fish in the estuaries and clustered at stream mouths are generally spooky and react to the slightest movements and sounds. Glide into such places with the boat motor switched off and start looking for moving fish. This is strictly a sight-casting show; use a floating line and fairly small baitfish patterns. Position the boat with an oar and



simply wait in the bow, ready to cast, until you see a school of fish in range. Cast well ahead of the school and begin retrieving when the salmon are about 10 to 15 feet from the fly. Frequently one or two fish break away from the school to attack the fly, and the visual element makes for exciting fishing.

When targeting bottomfish, cast a shooting taper (425 to 1150 grains) or high-density sinking-tip line ahead of the boat in the direction the craft is drifting and strip off line as the boat moves over your line. Doing so allows time for the fly to sink to depths of 60 or 70 feet before you begin the retrieve. Larger baitfish patterns, retrieved erratically, are usually irresistible to rockfish, lingcod, and other saltwater bottomfish, and vicious strikes are typical, but in some instances, especially with salmon, you will simply feel a light tap and then your line goes slack. These "slack line bites," often difficult to feel, occur when the fish swims in the same direction as your retrieve. When this happens, point your rod tip at the fish, strip vigorously until you get a tight line, and then set the hook. In this type of fishing your rod tip is underwater most of the time.

### The Task

Catching wild Pacific salmon and bottomfish in the vastness of open water takes persistence and patience, not to mention a prime location—and Tasu Sound is such a place. This type of fishing is indeed challenging, but those who are successful enjoy a deserved feeling of lofty angling achievement. For hardy fly anglers ready to test their mettle in a wild and scenic location, Tasu Sound offers remote and virtually untapped adventure. ➔

*Jack W. Berryman is a freelance writer who lives in Kirkland, Washington.*

## TASU SOUND NOTEBOOK

**When:** September.

**Where:** Along the southwest edge of Moresby Island, in British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands.

**Headquarters:** All services available in the jump-off town of Sandspit. Information: Sandspit/North Moresby Chamber of Commerce, [www.sandspitqci.com](http://www.sandspitqci.com); Northern British Columbia Tourism Association, (800) 663-8843, [www.northernbctravel.com](http://www.northernbctravel.com).

**Appropriate gear:** 8- to 12-wt. rods, sinking-tip and floating lines, sinking shooting tapers in a variety of densities up to 1150 grains, 5- to 10-ft. leaders with 12- to 20-lb. tippets.

**Useful fly patterns:** Probasco's Herring, Blanton's Whistler, Clouser Minnow, Waslick Sea Bait, Abel Anchovy, Lefty's Deceiver, Popovic's Surf Candy, Lambuth Candlefish, Harris Sand Eel, Johnson's Sand Lance, all sizes 1-4/0; small euphausiid patterns.

**Necessary accessories:** Float coats, rain coats and pants, and rubber boots provided by West Coast Resorts. Bring breathable waders, wading boots, light rain jacket, gloves, hat, polarized sunglasses, thermal socks, lip balm, sunblock, layered warm clothing, bathing suit for the hot tub, camera/film. Luggage limited to 25 lb.

**Nonresident licenses:** US\$35/5 days. Licenses are issued by West Coast Resorts at check-in; consult the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans Web site at [www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca).

**Fly shops/guides:** *Vancouver:* Anglers West Fly & Tackle, (604) 874-3474, [www.anglerswest.net](http://www.anglerswest.net); Michael & Young Fly Shop, (604) 639-2278, [www.myflyshop.com](http://www.myflyshop.com). West Coast Resorts, (800) 810-8933, [www.westcoastresorts.com](http://www.westcoastresorts.com); Langara Fishing Adventures, (800) 668-7544, [www.langara.com](http://www.langara.com); West Coast Fishing Club, (888) 432-6666, [www.westcoastfishingclub.com](http://www.westcoastfishingclub.com).

**Books/maps:** *Salmon of the Pacific* by Adam Lewis; *Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon* by Bruce Ferguson, Les Johnson, and Pat Trotter; *Salmon to a Fly: Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon in the Open Ocean* by Jim Crawford; *Saltwater Fly Patterns* by Lefty Kreh; *Saltwater Fly Fishing for Pacific Salmon* by Barry Thornton; *The Estuary Flyfisher* by Steve Raymond; *Fly Fishing the Pacific Inshore* by Ken Hanley. Nautical Chart No. 3859 (Tasu Sound); *Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii* by International Travel Maps, (604) 879-3621, [www.itmb.com](http://www.itmb.com).

