

The Dipnetter

News of the River from the
Columbia River Inter-Tribal
Fish Commission



June 2014

CRITFC Executive Director's Message

OUR LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER BIRD PROBLEM



▲ A Caspian tern with a salmon smolt caught in the Columbia River estuary.

▼ Nearly 15,000 pairs of double crested cormorants occupy a single island near the mouth of the Columbia River.



We often talk about the struggle of juvenile salmon and steelhead to survive their journey through the Columbia River dams but rarely do we discuss the challenges they face when their journey to the ocean is nearly over. Last month, a group of CRITFC commissioners and staff received an up-close look at one of the largest challenges to juvenile salmon and steelhead: birds in the Columbia River estuary. This stretch of river is a major danger for juvenile fish because of predation by Caspian terns and double crested cormorants at East Sand Island.

East Sand Island is a natural island that was capped off and expanded by the US

Corps of Engineers when they dumped material they dredged from the river bottom there. This was part of their effort to keep shipping lanes open for barge traffic. The island is home to tens of thousands cormorants and thousands of terns. East Sand Island is home to one of the world's largest breeding colonies of both Caspian terns and double crested cormorants. Last year, there were 14,900 breeding pairs of double crested cormorants and 7,400 breeding pairs of terns. With over 45,000 adult birds on East Sand Island foraging for both themselves and their young, the impacts to juvenile salmon and steelhead are significant.



Paul Lumley
YAKAMA

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An estimated 20% of the juvenile salmon and steelhead that pass through the Columbia River estuary on their migration to the Pacific Ocean are eaten by these two species alone. This tern and cormorant predation seriously impacts the Columbia Basin's salmon population. In 2013, the East Sand Island cormorants consumed 16 million juvenile salmonids and the terns consumed another 4.9 million. Annual losses of this size have been occurring since 2011.

With avian predation impacts to salmon and steelhead so significant, the region can no longer afford to ignore the impacts of cormorants and terns on the region's fisheries population. The equilibrium between predator and prey is out of balance. Measures must be taken to restore the balance between terns, cormorants, and salmon. 🐟

SPRING CHINOOK FISHERY

STUART ELLIS, CRITFC HARVEST BIOLOGIST

This year's spring chinook return is coming very close to the forecast level. It is currently predicted to be 224,000 at the Columbia River mouth and about 207,000 at Bonneville. The spring run lasts until June 15, so the actual run could be a few thousand fish different. The pre-season forecast was for a run of 227,000 at the river mouth, so this may be one of the closest forecasts in a long time. The ceremonial permit fishery is completed and commercial sales began on May 6 for Zone 6 platform and hook-and-line fish. The commercial spring gillnet fishery of May 20-22 was the first since 2010. After the initial fishery, the tribes will review the catches to see if there may be room for additional gillnet fishing. There appears to be good demand from both wholesale buyers and members

of the public, so we expect prices to stay good. Summer management period fisheries start on June 16 and we expect good fishing opportunity in the summer for both chinook and sockeye.

Even though the weather is getting better, the river is still high and the water is cold. The river is still about 55°F at Bonneville, which is way too cold to be in the water, so make sure you fish safely. 🐟

LIFE JACKET OFFER

LES BROWN, CRITFC SALMON MARKETING SPECIALIST

The Washington State Drowning Prevention Network has partnered with Big 5 Sporting Goods to provide 25% off coupons for life jackets. A downloadable coupon (link appears below) can be used at Big 5 Sporting Goods in Washington and North Idaho until September 30, 2014.

Please share the coupon links with family and friends who go out on the river. Extra special thanks to Trisha McClure, Spokane Regional Health District, and Big 5 Sports for making these coupons possible. If you have questions about this program, contact Trisha at tmmclure@spokanecounty.org.



DISCOUNT COUPONS AVAILABLE ON THESE WEBSITES:

- **Seattle Children's Hospital**
www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/
- **Spokane Regional Health District**
www.srhd.org/topics/drowning.asp

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BOATING SAFETY: KNOW YOUR BOAT'S LIMITS

LES BROWN, CRITFC SALMON MARKETING SPECIALIST

Know how much weight your boat was made to hold. Boats made in the last 20 years have labels indicating their weight capacity. If the label is missing, a boat owner can contact the manufacturer with the hull number and should be able to retrieve that information. Once you know, don't exceed that amount of weight.

What is overloaded? With the waves and currents on the Columbia, overloading your boat is likely to bring water over the side. If water is coming up to the bottom of the motor head on the outboard, you are overloaded. Before that happens, get back to the dock and unload.

Navigation lights as required: Operating between 30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise and in areas where visibility is reduced to less than ¼ mile, your vessel must display proper running lights. A combination red/green sidelights and an all-around white mast light is required.

Whether your boat is aluminum or fiberglass, secure your load. Don't let totes or bags slide around the bottom of the boat. Weight can change from side to side and front to back. If you have an aluminum boat, use the lash points to hold your cargo in place. An off-balance boat is a dangerous boat. 🐟



If your boat is less than 20 years old, it should have a capacity label that looks something like this. The label shows the maximum number of passengers, the maximum weight, the maximum weight of passengers plus gear and motors, and the maximum size of motor. Exceeding the recommended maximums is not advised and can have disastrous results.

CARING FOR THE FISH

LES BROWN, CRITFC SALMON MARKETING SPECIALIST

The Sanitation Checklist found in the Tribal Fishers Handbook. A downloadable version is found on the CRITFC website. (See article for the link.)

Practicing good sanitation doesn't happen by accident, it takes a well thought out plan that can be implemented each and every day. When the public has confidence that your fish is clean, iced, wholesome, and well taken of, everyone benefits. Some wholesale fish buyers are required through their HACCP food safety plans to have increased detail in their record keeping for purchasing fish. This can mean they need to show a record that the fish they purchase comes from fishers who also record their good sanitation practices. These sanitation plans can vary but a good example of a basic sanitary plan for selling your fish either to a wholesale buyer or direct to the public is in the Tribal Fishers Handbook.

Visit the Fisher Services section of the CRITFC website to learn more about Food Quality and Sanitation. The direct link is at <http://www.critfc.org/for-tribal-fishers/food-quality-guidelines/>. On this page, you can also download a sanitation checklist to print out as you need them. Keep the completed checklists in a binder or clipboard should your buyer ask to see them.

Columbia River Indian fishers are becoming well known for taking good care of the fish. By committing to food handling practices, we can ensure that people continue to see that we honor the salmon in how we care for our harvest.

If you have any questions, please call Les Brown, Salmon Marketing at 503-799-8640. 🐟





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The Dipnetter

*Yakama • Warm Springs
Umatilla • Nez Perce*



The Caspian Tern Colony in the Columbia Rive Estuary



An artificial island near the mouth of the Columbia River that was created by the US Army Corps of Engineers has had the inadvertant consequence of creating the perfect nesting conditions for two bird species, both of which prey on juvenile salmon and steelhead. Caspian terns (pictured here) and double-crested cormorants consume 1 in 5 smolts making their way to the ocean. Inside learn more about this growing problem.