

Yo man, glad to see you got out this weekend. That is a fucking pig you posted up. Congrats! I got out Thurs and Fri as planned. Thurs I drove two hours up the coast to a little river known for kicking out big fish. Not to be for me, but I was able to convince a nickel bright 21" Chinook jack to eat my drifted eggs. This was my first time fishing this river for salmon and man it's tough to get access from the bank with the deadline so low. I ended up doing a bunch of scouting and drove down to the mouth to sling a spinner for fresh coho at one point. No love. No worries, I had a great time and was stoked for day 2.

Day 2 I hit my "local" river for the first time ever. I moved up here to Oregon in late March and the river closed for steel on April 1st, so I had never actually been down there with a rod in hand. I drove up from tidewater and pulled over at the first good bottleneck I could find. The whole river narrowed down to a 10' wide slot in some huge rocks and then filtered into a big pool with nobody on it. Perfect. I waded out to some rocks at the bottom of the little slot and started drifting eggs through the pool. The day before I was using my old Calcutta 400 (OG before B series) for bobber fishing and the free spool sucked. I had just gone through the thing, cleaned it up and changed the drags, but on Thursday I found the old 400 was just not spinning well enough to fish. So, at 5am on Fri morning while getting my gear together I decided to swap out for my trusty Calcutta 250 which spins like a top, but doesn't have much in the way of line capacity. I spooled it up with the rest of a spool of 30# spectra I had laying around, which just filled it up. Nice. The gear switch will come up in later in the story, but I digress back to fishing. So there I am sending my bobber through this hole and getting a feel for where the deep spots are. I notice that if I cast into the heavy current just to the other side of the slot, that my bobber would stay nice and vertical the whole time as it slid through the narrow channel of the hole. Just a little to the left or right and I was hitting bottom. After a couple dozen casts I am starting to wonder if this hole's a bust when I notice my bobber kind of shimmy around and I felt a slack line shake. Shit I just got bit and didn't even know it! Rebait, cast back out, feed the bobber down the slot, bobber shimmy, engage the reel, wind, wind, hook-up! A nice bright 30" male comes to net and just like that fish on the rocks. I'm about a half hr into the morning with fresh ink drying on my tag and still nobody around. Stoked!

Back to it, although I ran out of the first jar of eggs I was using and grabbed another without paying attention. Five runs through the hole and nothing. That's when I realized I had inadvertently switched cures. Switch back to another jar of the original eggs and make another cast. Bobber going right down through my fishy little slot and again I get smacked. Wind, wind, wind and my line sizzles through the water and just when it was about to come tight, nothing. Damn fish had grabbed my roe and swam towards me. Rebait, cast out, bobber down, engage reel, nothing. Damn picky biters. Once again, rebait, pitch my rig into the current, feed it down through the slot and sail it way down the hole. Nothing. Fuck it I'm directly above my bobber, so no belly to worry about, I just let it ride. I'm way down to the bottom of the hole and starting to think man I don't have but a quarter spool of line left, when my bobber slips under. Solid hook up this time and this things a pig. My trusty 9' 15-50 Okuma "H3LLCAT" Pro-model (just busting your chops man, you do a great job of not naming brands, but your Okuma fetish is evident!) was folded and I realized I was at the disadvantage in this battle. Being primarily a saltwater fisherman for the last 15 years I'm no stranger to big fish and I know when overmatched your best bet is to get that fishes head turned and keep it coming. I knew I was lucky as shit this thing didn't just turn its head and spool me right off the bat. I put the wood to this fish and kept its head controlled and the

damn thing swam almost right up to me. Wind, wind, wind, I did what I could, but the fish relieved just enough tension to turn its head. Zzzzzzzz, in a blink of an eye this thing pressed reset on the fight and was back to the bottom of the pool where I hooked up. This went back and forth and eventually I got it back up to within a couple rod lengths of me, but I couldn't see it in the dark tea-colored water. This thing stayed down the whole time and never did the shake its head at the surface thing. Just stayed hunkered down while I put maximum pressure on it. I was starting to think about the end game at this point seeing as how I'm fishing solo and there's no one around, netting this beast is going to be a task. The fish is tiring, but not done and I have to pull upcurrent to get this fish to me. Rod lift, wind, rod lift, wind, almost there. Then it wasn't. Line went slack and my jaw dropped as my bobber slipped off my slack line and into the river. WTF? No head shakes, no last run. I had this fishes head turned and the line just parted. FUCK! I didn't even have to reel my line in to check the end to see what happened, I was that close. Sure enough, my spectra was all wispy and frayed from the boulder garden I was fishing in. Tough shit. Oh well, I did my best to re-rig quickly, but my hands were shaking too much to thread the spectra back through a new bobber. Ha ha, the adrenaline was pumping and I was mainlined. Fucking jacked out of my mind! This is all within the first hour of the morning too.

I managed to rerig and back to fishing. I soon found that hole was spooked and time to move on. So I drove around a bit and scouted a few spots without fishing before settling on another nice little narrow slot/pool combo like the 1st spot. Bingo! 2nd cast, fish on and I ended up landing this one, a nice 34"-35" nookie that fought well, but nothing like the pig earlier. I saw it bleeding a bit at color, so I figured I might as well tag it. Once I netted it though I realized the fish was just hooked in the corner of the mouth and the bleeding was superficial from the gum/cheek. He was blushing a bit with a hint of pink on the tail and fairly dark, so I ended up letting it go. This is my first fall salmon season, so not sure how dark they can be and still cut well? Anyway, this was supposed to be a quick morning trip and I was to be back by noon so I left shortly after.

The hour-long drive home flew by as I thought about my morning. I have fought big fish in many different settings and this one stood out. I had just stood toe to toe with a size-large river fish and lost. Mad respect to that fish. One thing about fishing is that it isn't always the size of the fish that makes it the most memorable, it's the venue. A 120# striped marlin hooked in 77° clean blue water off Cabo San Lucas is a nice fight, but unless it's your first it really isn't any more remarkable than a 10" golden trout taken on a 3-weight from an alpine meadow stream at 10,000 feet. My buddy's dad fishes commercial hook and line salmon in Santa Cruz, CA and I have been out with them sport fishing and caught a few open-water salmon in the salt. The meat was incredible, but the fight pretty mundane really out in 40 fathoms of saltwater. A salmon in the salt fights with spirit, but nothing compared to the brute force of a pargo in the rocks down in Baja or the sheer power of a dropper-loop yellowtail hooked on 50 lb at the islands, your Tib-framed 4/0 Narrow screaming as the fish dives straight for the pinnacle in 30 fathoms that it calls home. Once a salmon enters the river though, the whole game changes. That big saltwater fish is now in a relatively tiny patch of freshwater and every movement is magnified. I hooked that fish in a boulder filled 6-foot deep pool of tea-colored water less than 100 yards long and 20 yards at its widest. As venues go this was one of the most memorable of my life. The morning was misting and I was all alone in the Oregon forest surrounded by trees showing their fall color. The setting was magical. As I

drove home I thought about 2 things: 1) I realized I am now hopelessly addicted to river salmon fishing & 2) I gotta swap out a bearing on my Calcutta 400 so I can get that thing to free-spool right so I can fish 50# braid for my mainline. That, or maybe someone from Team Salmon will hook a brother up with a boat ride so I can stay on top of these fish!

Much love to you Oregon. Thank you.

BTW H3llcat, the cure that got bit was the same jars of eggs I offered to you a couple weeks ago. Ha ha beginners luck, I'll take it.

Christopher Reed