

Fishing the Fall Salmon Run in Michigan - A Beginner's Guide

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Sample of Content:

A beginner's guide written by a beginner. It provides the how,what,when, and where of fishign the Fall Salmon Run in Michigan.

Content:

I decided to write this guide because a couple of years ago I was the "beginner." I don't claim to be a master at it, but I have lost my fair share of fish and have put a few in the freezer each year. Let me start by saying that, to the best of my knowledge, Michigan has the best Salmon fishery in the United States except for Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest (which is where our Salmon were originally stocked from). I also have to say that once you hook one, you will be "hooked" on the experience. I have broken this article into several parts to keep it organized, and from time to time the article will be updated as I learn more about it. This year I am going to try fly-fishing for the Salmon as

well as bait fishing.

About the Fish

Salmon stocking started in Michigan in 1967 to combat the excessive Alewife population. The first species to be stocked was the Coho. As time went on the Chinook was added to the mix. Since that time they have taken off, and between the naturally reproduction that occurs and the DNR stocking we now have one of the best salmon fisheries anywhere. For pictures of the fish please refer to the Michigan Fishing Regulation book for the current year. In addition to the Coho and Chinook salmon you may also occasionally catch a Pink Salmon or Atlantic Salmon, but to the best of my knowledge it doesn't happen often. Maybe someone reading this can correct me if I am wrong.

Where to Go

We are lucky to have access to a state that has such a diverse fishery. Very few states have as many lakes and rivers as we do, or have the variety of fish that live there. For our particular purposes we need rivers that drain into the Great Lakes, since that is where the salmon spend their adult lives. If you search the internet you will find many rivers that have salmon such as the Muskegon, Big Manistee, Little Manistee, Pere Marquette, and Betsie, just to name a few. Some of these rivers have naturally reproducing populations of Salmon while others are stocked by the DNR. There are also several rivers in the Upper Peninsula that play host to salmon in the fall. In all the rivers you have to pay close attention to the fishing regulations because certain sections of the rivers may be closed to fishing to protect the spawning fish or have limitations on the gear you can fish with.

When to Go

The main salmon run occurs every fall. There is no set start date, but you can usually start to see fish in the river in early September, and expect the run to be pretty much done by the end of October. A lot of this depends on the weather. A lack of rain and/or warm weather can make the run start later, and extra rain with cooler temperatures can cause the run to start a little earlier. I guess it all depends on when the fall rains and cooler temperatures hit the area. If you go to the rivers during September and October you are going to eventually find fish, it's just a matter of timing it to catch the big run.

How to Fish For Them

This article is only going to cover techniques for the fisherman who wades. Most fishermen use either a spinning rod or fly rod and do the Chuck-and-Duck method. I believe this fishing method was named by the fly-fisherman because of the extra weight involved and the problem of getting hit in the head (Been There-Done That). You can also cast flies, such as Woolly Buggers, egg patterns, streamers, nymphs, and probably others I don't know about yet. Yet another method is to suspend spawn, flies, or jigs below a float of some type. Whatever rig you choose you will need some waders, a net of some type, a head-lamp or other light source for night fishing, rain-gear, and some warm clothes.

The Chuck-n-Duck method usually involves a three-way swivel, some type of weight, and a hook with salmon eggs or yarn balls. I have also seen anglers use flies or plugs instead of the hook and spawn. A diagram can be seen at Figure 1 which is listed at the end of the article.

I personally prefer to use about a 3' leader when I fish this method but you will have to experiment and modify it to fit the conditions. If the fish are spooky you might need to lengthen the leader a bit more. You can also do a modified version of this without the three way swivel by using rubber-core sinkers for weight. To do this, tie the hook directly to your main line and then connect a rubber-core sinker above the hook about 18" for weight. This will get your lure into the current but not necessarily bouncing on the bottom. Again, you will have to experiment with the length of line between the weight and the hook, but I would keep it at least 12" from the hook. A diagram of this rig can be seen in Figure 2 which is listed at the end of the article.

Fishing flies for salmon is gaining in popularity. I have not tried it yet, but plan too this year. I understand that the usual flies are either egg patterns, woolybugger variations, big streamers, and egg-sucking leaches. I am going to try them all and see if I can get a hit. The nice thing about fishing the flies is that you also run the chance of hooking other trout species while searching for the salmon. If you want more professional instruction on fly-fishing for salmon there are several outfitters that are offering the service now. Do an internet search on it and you should have little difficulty finding one.

[Figure 1](#)

[Figure 2](#)

<http://www.michfish.com>

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