



AFTER TWO HOURS of fishing this quartet of fishermen from Guelph landed a pair of Chinook salmon. The men were fishing in 12-Mile-Creek where it runs through Lowville Park.

Salmon hooked on spawning run

By Olga Darcovich

They knew the fish were there. They could see them, lounging in a four-foot hole in the clear waters of 12-Mile-Creek where it flows through Lowville Park. But the fish weren't giving their lines a nibble and, after a time, the two fishermen moved a few yards downstream.

In the shallows a salmon darted by quickly, as if it knew it was running a gauntlet of fishermen patiently lining the banks of the creek.

The people were out for the annual fall salmon run up 12-Mile-Creek to Lowville, where the fish are stopped by a private dam. The fisherfolk — men, a few women, a lot of kids — came from Hamilton and Guelph as well as from local communities.

Although all were hopeful of luring one of the big Chinook or Coho with bits of yellow sponge or with worms, they were less certain about what they'd do with the fish if they caught one. The big fish have spent a few years in the polluted waters of Lake Ontario.

Some thought they'd freeze the fish, eating only an occasional meal, while others thought to solve the problem by giving the fish to friends. One man claimed the concern about pollution was nonsense and vowed he'd eat the fish if he caught one. Another was fishing for a trophy to stuff and mount.

Trevor Kellar, a biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources in Cambridge, said the fish were safe to eat in moderation. Safety guidelines are determined according to the size of the fish and more precise information is available from the Ministry.

The salmon run started this year in early September. Salmon return to their

breeding ground to spawn. It's believed they use their sense of smell to identify the water of their creek, Mr. Kellar said.

The Chinook, the most prevalent species in the creek, were ready to spawn (produce ripe eggs) by the end of September, the biologist said. They spawn where they find suitable gravel beds and have finished spawning

now. A Pacific species of salmon, they die in the creek after spawning — if they aren't caught first.

The creek was heavily fished in the latter half of September. A few salmon can be found up to January, but Mr. Kellar anticipates a rapid drop in the number of Chinook by the end of October. The run of Coho may continue for some time,

depending on conditions such as water flow and air temperature. Salmon fishing is permitted in the creek all year round, he said.

Natural reproduction is low in 12-Mile-Creek, Mr. Kellar said. Consequently, the Ministry collects 500,000 eggs and takes them to hatcheries in Wiarton. The creek is then restocked with the hatched fish.

As the salmon grow, they move into the deeper water of the lake. The Coho return to spawn when they are three years old and the Chinook when they are four. Cool water and increased flow are the stimuli which cause the fish to move in from the lake and up the creek in the autumn.



SEEING SALMON in the creek attracted fishermen to this point on 12-Mile-Creek in Lowville Park. Bits of sponge and worms were the bait used, but the fish ignored both.



WATERPROOF cold-weather gear enables this man to get in the creek with the fish. Anglers have been turning out in droves, lured by the prospect of catching a salmon.

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