

Reel Deal: Ocean still anglers' best bet for catches

July 13, 2019



Although there have been some salmon caught to the north in the Rogue Bay as well as on the Upper Klamath River, the best fishing on the Wild Rivers Coast is still the ocean.

The bottomfish have been biting on both sides of the California-Oregon boarder this week, especially rockfish. Meanwhile, up in Oregon there have been lots of coho salmon caught in close this week, with lots of them hatchery fish. Keeper salmon have been harder to come by in Crescent City, but there have been a few Chinook salmon caught.

Meanwhile, the Pacific halibut bite has been a little bit better in California than it has in Oregon.

On the ocean

It has been windy at times throughout the week, but anglers have had a few windows to get out on the ocean over the past seven days. Anglers on both sides of the California-Oregon border are reporting fairly easy limits of black snappers, as well as other varieties of rockfish. There have also been some lingcod caught, though they seem to be a little bit harder to come by at the moment.

Meanwhile, the main event out of Brookings seems to be salmon fishing. Although there haven't been a lot of kings hooked this week, Andy Martin of Wild Rivers Fishing said the coho salmon have moved in closer to shore and have made for good fishing throughout the week.

“It has been pretty decent,” Martin said. “We are still getting about a fish per rod — mostly silvers (coho) and a few kings. There are quite a few wild silvers and we aren’t seeing the keeper kings, but there are some kings around.”

Martin estimated that his boats caught about three or four coho salmon for every Chinook salmon that was caught this week. He also said about half of the silvers hauled in were hatchery coho, which are able to be retained in Oregon. Wild coho salmon must still be released.

“There are a lot of coho in close, a lot of people are overshooting them,” Martin said. “We have let a few go while bottomfishing.”

While many anglers have been targeting salmon, there haven’t been many reports of Pacific halibut catches. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, just 79 pounds of halibut were caught in the Southern Oregon Coast, which lives the subarea quota at 10,153 pounds remaining, representing about 90 percent of the entire quota.

In California the Pacific halibut are being caught a little bit more frequently than in Brookings, possibly because there are more sportfishermen targeting them.

Jim Mitchell of Gotcha Hooked Fish Trips said he went out with John Espitia on Tuesday just before low tide. After three hours without much luck, Mitchell said that suddenly both he and Espitia had a halibut on their lines. Mitchell said he lost his about halfway to the boat, but Espitia managed to bring it all the way up. Mitchell said they also hauled in a couple petrale while targeting Pacific halibut.

According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife projection, there have been about 580 pounds of Pacific halibut caught in July. That brings the season total up to 9,810 — roughly 25 percent of the 39,000 pound quota for the season.

Another species of halibut — California halibut — are also starting to show up out of Crescent City with multiple catches in close to the harbor, and off of South Beach.

Meanwhile, sportfishermen are still waiting for Chinook salmon to show up in a little bit bigger numbers, but there have been a few caught throughout the week out of the border.

River fishing

The Rogue River is starting to warm up, which bodes well for salmon fishing in the Rogue Bay in the coming weeks. Martin said that anglers are already starting to see an uptick in the bay starting in the middle of the week.

“The Rogue Bay has been slow, but (Wednesday) showed signs of improvement with maybe a fish per boat,” Martin said. “(Thursday) was probably the best day so far, because there were several guides that had multiple fish. I heard one guide got four, a few guides got three, and several guides got two. It has been mostly a morning bite at the high tide, before it starts going out too much.”

Meanwhile the Klamath River remains fairly slow for salmon fishermen, especially on the Lower Klamath River.

“The estuary has been really slow, they are catching some steelhead in the estuary but not kings” Martin said. “Up river they are a few salmon being caught but not a lot. The Trinity River has been really good though, because those spring salmon have already gone through because we had high water for so long.”

Martin said that both the Rogue and Klamath rivers have a significant amount of moss, which forces anglers to clean their gear more frequently.

Fishing contacts: Englund Marine Supply Company at 707-464-323; Andy Martin of Wild Rivers Fishing at 206-388-8988; Jim Mitchell of Gotcha Hooked Fish Trips at 464-8482; Tally Ho II Sportfishing at 707-464-1236.