

Sports

How did coho salmon end up in the North Santiam River?

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The legend of how Oregon's most delicious fish arrived in the North Santiam River includes some pretty wild stories. • Some say the fish took flight, surviving a tumble through the turbines of Detroit and Big Cliff dams to establish a population in the river below. • Others say a truckload of baby fish were released into Stout Creek. Still, others say an enterprising angler broke into a fish hatchery, stole juvenile fish and released them into the Santiam to improve fishing. • Like all legends, it's hard to know the difference between truth and fiction, and the reality is probably much simpler, say wildlife officials.

But however coho salmon ended up in the Santiam, many anglers are happy to see them this time of year.

"They have the best meat I've ever had," said longtime angler and shuttle driver Bob Lusk, the source of a few coho legends. "We ate one for Thanksgiving a few years ago and, boy, it tasted better than any turkey we've ever tasted."

How to catch 'em

Coho aren't native to the Santiam, and they don't return in big numbers every year. But wildlife officials said this has been a robust season, with more than 8,500 fish swimming above Willamette Falls — the most since 2014.

Coho are 12 to 16 pounds, a classic chrome color, and anglers are allowed to harvest two per day. Lusk said he catches them from September all the way through Thanksgiving on the Santiam.

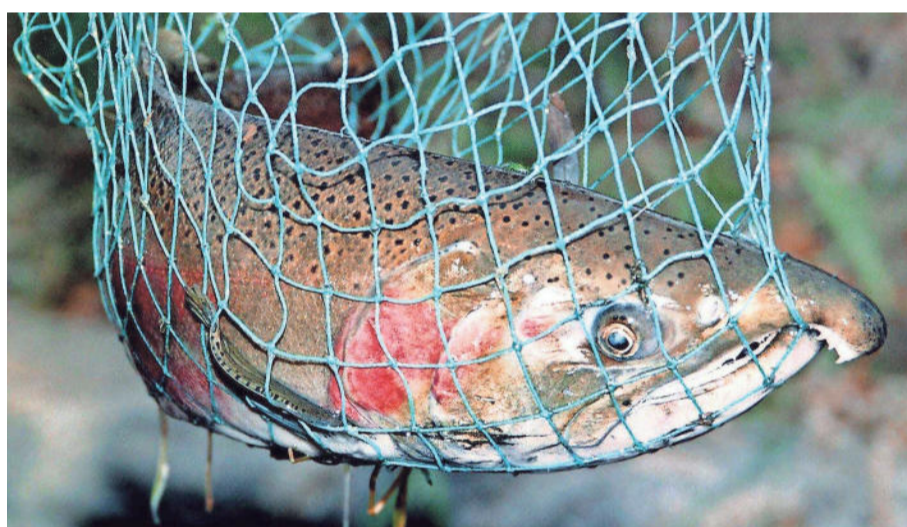
Coho enjoy the deep and slow waters, off the main current. Lusk even uses his boat to get into the sloughs on the far edges of the stream, typically downstream of Stayton and Mehama bridge.

"Their numbers fluctuate, but in general the fishing is better now than it was 20 years ago," Lusk said.

Coho are certainly in the minority there. All the other salmon and steel-



Fishing guide Mike Ferris pilots his boat down the North Santiam River between Stayton and Shelburn in June. ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL



A coho salmon in a fisherman's net. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

head have seen major declines on the Santiam.

To catch coho, Lusk said he uses a #3 Blue Fox lure with a splash of pink, along with a blue pilot wiggle wart.

The Santiam isn't the only place coho swim nearby.

Depending on the run, coho can reach the Tualatin, Molalla, Yamhill and Luckiamute rivers, as well as Rickreall Creek, said Oregon Fish and Wildlife Department biologist Elise Kelley.

"The Yamhill River usually has the strongest runs," she said.

So, where did coho really come from?

Coho are interesting not just because of their taste, but because it's not clear exactly how they arrived in the North Santiam or Upper Willamette watershed.

Historically, only winter steelhead and spring chinook could migrate above Willamette Falls on high flows.

The official story on coho is that beginning in the 1950s, wildlife officials stocked all manner of fish above Willamette Falls, hoping to improve fishing, including coho.

"They never did much — we never established a population," said Bruce McIntosh, deputy fish chief of inland fisheries for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. "It petered out in the 1980s and by the 1990s they'd mostly disappeared."

But then a funny thing happened. Ocean conditions improved and, seemingly out of nowhere, coho began returning in big numbers. After being a

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Kennedy, St. Paul win volleyball titles

Pete Martini Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Volleyball

OSAA CLASS 2A

Kennedy: The Trojans beat Central Linn 3-0 on Saturday to capture the OSAA Class 2A state championship.

In the title match, Sophia Carley had 18 kills for Kennedy in the victory, and Ellie Cantu had 25 assists.

The Trojans finished the season 33-1.

CLASS 1A

St. Paul: The Buckaroos beat Powder Valley 3-0 on Saturday to win the OSAA Class 1A state championship.

In the title match, Isabelle Wyss had 18 kills for St. Paul, and Karlee Southerland added 18 assists.

Perrydale: Perrydale lost 3-0 to Damascus Christian on Saturday to place sixth in the state tournament.

Perrydale beat Crosshill Christian 3-2 in the consolation.

CLASS 4A

North Marion: North Marion lost 3-0 to Banks in the consolation round on Saturday at the OSAA Class 4A state tournament.

Cross country

CLASS 5A

On the boys side, Silverton placed seventh. Trevor Ortega led the team finishing 17th in 16:21.1.



Kennedy's Ibeth Gomez sets the ball in a match on Oct. 21. On Saturday, Kennedy beat Central Linn 3-0 to win the Class 2A state championship. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

CLASS 4A GIRLS AND BOYS

Stayton's girls team placed fifth in the OSAA Class 4A state meet, with Hope Bridge leading the Eagles with a 10th-place finish at 19:14.2.

On the boys side, Stayton's Ben Kirby was 23rd with a time of 16:36.5.

CLASS 3A BOYS, 3A/2A/1A GIRLS,

2A/1A BOYS

In the 3A/2A/1A girls meet, Kennedy placed seventh, with Cassie Traeger leading the Trojans with a 25th-place finish at 21:10.0.

In the 2A/1A boys meet, Chemawa placed 10th, with Clement Afterbuffalo finishing 16th at 17:12.6 to lead the team.

State cross country results

CLASS 5A BOYS

Silverton: 17. Trevor Ortega (16:21.1); 23. Jadon Mansur (16:30.5); 44. Jonathan Hansen (17:02.5); 52. Carter Gauvin (17:12.2); 64. Andrew Fronza (17:34.4); 74. Colin Allen (17:57.6); 77. Sam Ellingson (18:08.7).

Individual state champion: Evan Holland, Ashland (14:30.4)
Team state champion: Ashland (41).
Local team placing: 7. Silverton (188).

CLASS 4A BOYS

Stayton: 23. Ben Kirby (16:36.5).
Individual state champion: John Peckham (15:48.7).
Team state champion: Philomath/Kings Valley (65).

CLASS 4A GIRLS

Stayton: 10. Hope Bridge (19:14.2); 28. Hailey Notman (20:14.2); 34. Bridget Spencer (20:38.7); 45. Jessica Mitchell (21:05.4); 50. Skyla Anderson (21:24.7); 60. Emma Frazeur (22:11.6); 73. Sarah Wolf (23:00.7).

Individual state champion: Ella Thorsett, Sisters (17:43.7)
Team state champion: Marist (50).
Local team placing: 5. Stayton (149).

CLASS 3A BOYS

Amity: 26. Drew McMullen (17:43.5).
Blanchet: 43. Andrew Hill (18:34.1).
Individual state champion: Henry Coughlin, Enterprise/Joseph/Wallowa (15:58.9)

Team state champion: Enterprise/Joseph/Wallowa (35).
Local team placing: 6. Santiam Christian (177).

CLASS 3A/2A/1A GIRLS

Kennedy: 25. Cassie Traeger (21:10.0); 30. Kylee Rodriguez (21:25.5); 40. Aleksandra Eyles (22:01.1); 53. Whitney Lopez (23:19.6); 62. Mikayla Schaecher (24:14.2); 70. Gisell Juarez (25:16.5); 72. Haley Kline (25:21.0).

Scio: 17. Athena Lau (20:33.1).
Individual state champion: Lila Fenner, Catlin Gabel (18:49.2).
Team state champion: Burns (43).
Local team placing: 7. Kennedy (170).

CLASS 2A/1A BOYS

Chemawa: 16. Clement Afterbuffalo (17:12.6); 43. Tyrrel Francisco (18:05.2); 55. Isaac Corn (18:50.7); 60. Davey Hogan (19:12.2); 65. Nazaire Brisbois (19:48.6); 66. Ryan Weir (20:04.6); 74. Aurelio Morrillo (22:41.4).

St. Paul: 12. Broden Lear (16:49.8).
Individual state champion: Seth Bergeron, St. Stephens Academy (15:50.5).
Team state champion: St. Stephens Academy (42).
Local team placing: 10. Chemawa (208).