The species that long eluded me



OVGARD

CAUGHT OVGARD

ojo loach. Amur weatherfish. Pond loach. Oriental weatherfish. Japanese weatherfish.

Luke's nemefish.

Misgurnus anguillicaudatus, a resilient, eel-like fish, goes by many names. The latter is just what I call them. Well, called them until this month.

Native to east Asia, the fish has been introduced all over the world by aquarists desiring to send it "back to nature" after deciding it's not the pet for them. As these fish can survive in heavily polluted waters, a wide array of temperatures and even barely oxygenated puddles until the next rain, they've taken a foothold — finhold? — almost everywhere they've been released. The name "weatherfish" allegedly comes from the fish's increased feeding activity before storms, though I wouldn't know because prior to this month, I'd never seen one in the wild.

They're supposed to exist all over the place, and I've investigated almost a dozen locations purported to have populations, from marshlands of Astoria to sloughs of Portland to agricultural ditches in Ontario. The one thing all of these locations have in common? I couldn't find weatherfish.

Last year, I expanded my search beyond Oregon and tried a pond outside of Salt Lake City where a friend had videotaped several of them feeding during the day. Nope. I tried a ditch in Florida purported to have them. Nada. I even checked the Weather app on my phone. Nothing. So, just as I've done with dating during the pandemic, I resigned myself to failure and hoped I'd get another shot sometime before I began to lose my hair.

Enter Peter Chang.

Peter

I met Peter in the old-fashioned way: when he shouted my name from a passing car as I walked down the side of a California road.

> "Luke?" "Luke!"

"Luke Ovgard!?"

The shock of someone five hours from home in a car I didn't recognize shouting my name as I skirted the edge of a boujee Californian waterfront would've killed someone with a weaker heart. Fortunately, repeated heartbreak has made the



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

After years and years of hunting for them, Peter Chang helped Luke Ovgard find and catch his "nemefish."



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

Luke Ovgard poses with Peter Chang, a reader and now friend whom he met after Peter shouted him down on the side of the road.

beating scar tissue in my chest resilient.

Unsure who the guy (or the three others in his car) were, I followed him to the nearby parking lot. It was broad daylight, and there were people everywhere, so I figured at least there would be witnesses to my murder.

Out of the car popped some guy I'd never seen before in my life.

In the passenger seat, a woman (I'd later learn this was his wife, Julie) seemed a bit embarrassed and kept apologizing profusely. Figuring this wasn't the typical behavior of a Bonnie and Clyde-type duo on a murderous rampage, I went

He introduced himself as Peter Chang, and told me he'd started reading my blog and then my column years before when he first got into fishing. I was floored.

It's not uncommon for

me to get recognized in my hometown by people I've never met who read my column, but I've been writing there for seven years. This seemed almost unreal.

I'm horrible with names but great with faces. Here, I was drawing a blank.

He told me as I tried not to visibly sigh in relief, "You wouldn't know me, but I'm a fan of your writing!"

I was humbled to rare speechlessness for a moment.

We talked for a few minutes, grabbed a picture together, and we parted ways.

I followed him on Instagram that day, and a few months later, I saw he'd caught my nemefish ...

Shame

As I planned this year's summer trip, I arranged to meet up with Peter and try for these weatherfish on

one of my first days on the road. We planned to visit a spot our mutual acquaintance, Ben Cantrell, had discovered. Peter and Julie graciously invited me to

stay with them. Peter and I met up in the early evening and walked to a remote creek on the outskirts of Los Angeles. After catching my first arroyo chub, another fish I'd tried and failed to catch a few times, I finally hooked my weatherfish — and promptly dropped it.

It's OK, because I caught another one. And dropped

This repeated, comically, for at least half an hour. I lifted no fewer than eight Oriental weatherfish/dojo loach/Luke's nemefish out of the water but failed to get one in hand for a picture. I touched several, even got one on land before seeing its snake-like movements propel it from the muddy shoreline into the stream and out of my life forever.

Peter was remarkably helpful, spotting the abundant fish for me and stifling most of his laughs as I dropped fish after fish.

Daylight faded with my patience, and he informed me we had about 15 minutes left before we had to move the cars out of the park.

In the wan light, I hooked my ninth? Tenth? Eleventh fish? I landed it, walked an unnecessary distance from the water and snapped a quick picture as Peter looked on approvingly.

I owed him so much; I could barely contain my joy. He helped me close a long, embarrassing chapter of failure in my fishing career, but the good news is that I was experimenting with my GoPro that night, so I immortalized 20 or 30 minutes of that repeated failure on film for future generations.

Though I hadn't released the video, I'm pretty sure his adorable infant daughter, Hailey, must've heard about my failings because she seemed pretty uncertain about me when I met her the next morning. Eventually, I won her over the same way I won over the weatherfish: with Peter's help. Grapes admittedly helped, too.

After years of repeated failure, Peter helped me solve that problem. So the next step, it would seem, is to have Peter take a look at my online dating profiles, right?

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Hockey:

Continued from Page B1

a record 25 times — but in this unusual season with teams playing in reformatted visions that was the case Thursday night.

Now the focus turns toward the Cup, and there's no such hatred toward namesake Lord Stanley.

"We got another series coming up," said Weber, who's playing in his first Cup final at age 35. "We've got to win four more games but definitely proud of everybody in that locker room right now and what we've accomplished so far. But definitely still work to be done."

The Canadiens are on one of the more surprising runs in postseason history, erasing a 3-1 deficit against Toronto in the first round, sweeping Winnipeg in the second and shutting down heavily favored Vegas in six games in the third. Only minutes after giving up the series-deciding overtime goal to Artturi Lehkonen, Golden Knights netminder Robin Lehner said: "Hell of a team. Works really hard. Sticks with their structure and they have a lot of great players. Everyone underestimates them."

Three-time Cup winner Patrick Sharp, now an NBC Sports analyst, expected Montreal to lose every round. Only after watching Canadiens goaltender Carey Price and his teammates frustrate Vegas did he realize he and so many others were just wrong.

"We should've known better," Sharp said Friday. "It's a team that's got some belief, no question about that, and those teams are often the most dangerous this time of year."

The lineup also is a

perfect mix of veterans -Price, Weber, Corey Perry and Eric Staal, who have been in plenty of playoff games before, with young players, including Caufield, Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nick Suzuki.

20-year-old The Caufield was playing college hockey as recently as March, and Suzuki just beat the Vegas organization that drafted and then traded him in a deal for former Montreal captain Max Pacioretty.

Price is the backbone, having stopped 495 of 530 shots to go into the final as a front-runner for the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP. Like Weber, it will be his first final.

Credit also has to go to coaching, with Montreal heading into the final with assistant Luke Richardson as the third person behind the bench in the past four months. Interim coach Dominique Ducharme took over when Claude Julien was fired in February, and Richardson is filling in after Ducharme tested positive for the coronavirus last week.

The Canadiens made sure Ducharme was on video from afar when they returned to their locker room Thursday night to share in the joy. Now that they've guaranteed at least four more games and their jubilant city is poised to celebrate, Ducharme could potentially return midway through the final.

With Ducharme on their minds, players quickly shifted from enjoying another series victory to thinking about trying to get another.

"They're not done yet," Richardson said. "They saw a fire in their eyes. They're already talking about it. ... Get right back at it. And we're looking forward to the challenge."

ON THE SLATE

SATURDAY, JUNE 26 Prep wrestling

Riverside at 3A state tournament, Redmond

Heppner, Echo/Stanfield at 2A state tournament, Sweet Home Youth baseball

Ashlee Hodgen Memorial Tournament: Columbia Gorge Hustlers vs.

Hodgen Distributing, 10 a.m.; Hillsboro vs. Hodgen Distributing, 3 p.m. Baker Tournament: Pepsi Diamondiaxx vs. La Grande, 10 a.m.; Pepsi Diamondjaxx vs. Elko, 3 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 27 Youth baseball

Ashlee Hodgen Memorial Tourna-

ment: Hodgen Distributing vs. TBD Baker Tournament: Pepsi Diamond-

MONDAY, JUNE 28 No events scheduled

TUESDAY, JUNE 29 No events scheduled

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30

No events scheduled

THURSDAY, JULY 1 Youth baseball

Spokane Tournament: Pepsi Dia-

mondjaxx vs. Claremont Cardinals, l p.m.; Pepsi Diamondjaxx vs. West Valley, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 2

Youth baseball

Spokane Tournament: Pepsi Diamondjaxx vs. Yakima Valley Peppers, 8 a.m.; Pepsi Diamondjaxx vs. Gonzaga Prep, 1 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 3 Youth baseball

Spokane Tournament: Pepsi Diamondjaxx vs. TBD



NCAA:

Continued from Page B1

Opendorse CEO Blake Lawrence, whose company is working with dozens of schools to create NIL programming and assistance for athletes, said it "seemed unfathomable" the NCAA would allow this to happen.

"But now that might be the best strategy," he said.

Following the template of a recommendation made by six Division I conferences to the D-I Council last week, schools would follow their state NIL laws. To that end, the University of Florida released its NIL guidelines that, among other things, bars school employees and

boosters from compensating athletes for NIL use.

About a dozen other states have NIL laws that could take effect next month and states such as Ohio have legislation pending.

"In a strange twist of events, schools in states without laws could have an advantage because they can make any rules they want," Lawrence said.

Most state laws about to go into effect restrict schools from being involved in financial agreements athletes make with third parties, Lawrence said. Given the ability to make their own policies, some schools might decide to take a more active role.

The pivot to a handsoff approach to NIL by the NCAA could be part of a broader strategy following the Supreme Court ruling in the Alston case. The high court said the NCAA cannot limit benefits schools provide to major college football and basketball players as long as they are tied to education.

The decision also raises the possibility of future antitrust challenges to NCAA compensation rules. A lawsuit targeting proposed changes to the NCAA's NIL rules was filed earlier this month by one of the plaintiffs' attorneys in Alston, and a judge on June 24 denied the NCAA's motion to dismiss the claim.

The NCAA could shift to conferences taking the lead on setting standards for athlete benefits as a potential way to avoid lawsuits.



