

Sockeye salmon return to Idaho disappoints biologists

By Keith Ridler
Associated Press

BOISE — A meager return of sockeye salmon to central Idaho this year despite high hopes and a new fish hatchery intended to help save the species from extinction has fisheries managers trying to figure out what went wrong.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game plans to form a working group to understand why only 27 of 660,000 juvenile fish raised in the hatchery and released in central Idaho in 2018 survived the two-year, 1,800-mile roundtrip to the ocean and back to return as adults. Fisheries managers expected about 800.

The working group will “look at possible mechanisms that could have contributed to the poor survival,” said John Powell of Fish and Game.

Powell said the young fish showed good survival rates as they swam down the Salmon River to the Snake River to the Columbia River and to the ocean.

Things looked good for the return trip as well.

“We do know that environmental conditions were favorable while the (adult) sockeye were migrating back from the ocean,” he said.

That would appear to indicate, he said, that significant



Steve Ringman / SeattleTimes-TNS, File Photo

A Snake River sockeye is captured in Stanley, Idaho, for its genes after swimming more than 900 miles to reach its spawning grounds.

losses occurred in either the Columbia River estuary or the Pacific Ocean.

Powell said adults that did return to Idaho tended to be smaller this year, an indication that ocean conditions might not have been favorable.

On a more positive note, 125 sockeye produced in Redfish and Pettit lakes by spawning adults and reared in the wild returned this year. Officials estimate the number

of those juvenile fish, called natural-origin fish, leaving the two lakes in 2018 to be about 30,000. Sockeye salmon typically spend 2 years in the ocean.

Powell said natural-origin fish survive at greater rates than hatchery-origin fish. But hatchery fish surviving at a rate 30 times below natural-origin fish is much worse than typical.

An estimated 150,000 sockeye at one time returned an-

nually to central Idaho, and Redfish Lake, near the small town of Stanley, was named for the abundant red-colored salmon that spawned there. Federal officials say the run declined starting in the early 1900s due to overfishing, irrigation diversions, dams and poisoning, eventually teetering on the brink of extinction in the early 1990s. The fish were listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 1991.

An elaborate hatchery program that tracks the genetics of individual fish was started in the 1990s to save the species, including raising brood stock that never enter the wild and help produce future generations. Those fish are raised at the Eagle Fish Hatchery in southwestern Idaho and at another hatchery at NOAA Fisheries' Manchester Research Station in Port Orchard, Washington. The dual system is intended to prevent the loss of the species if a catastrophe occurs at one of the hatcheries.

Officials most recently started using a new hatchery in southeastern Idaho, the \$13.5-million Springfield Fish Hatchery, to raise sockeye salmon for release in central Idaho. That hatchery is intended to eventually increase the number of young sockeye released into the wild to more than a million.

For the first time in 2017, all the young fish released came from that hatchery. But only 16% survived the trip from central Idaho

to Lower Granite Dam in western Washington. Many of the fish died not long after being released into Redfish Lake Creek.

Biologists determined the young fish died because they couldn't acclimate to the hard water in the creek after being raised in the soft water at the Springfield Fish Hatchery.

So, in spring 2018 and 2019, biologists first let the young fish acclimate at the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery near Stanley that has medium-hard water.

It appeared to work as a good number of the 2018 fish successfully headed downstream, raising hopes of a good return this year. That was dashed when only 27 adult fish came back.

Of the 125 natural-origin fish that did make it back this year, genetic sampling showed that 38 came from Pettit Lake and 87 from Redfish Lake. One of the Pettit Lake fish died in captivity, and the remaining 37 were released into Pettit Lake to spawn naturally.

SKIING

Continued from Page 1B

In a letter posted on the resort's website, Johnson wrote: “We will not be completely cutting back on ticket sales, just reducing the amount of day tickets sold each day to the point where we can manage day-to-day operations while comfortably practicing social distancing,” Johnson wrote. “The number of day tickets available for any given day will be based solely on previous years ticket sales.”

The effects of the pandemic will be more noticeable inside the lodge. About half the usual complement of tables and

chairs will be available to ensure guests can keep a proper distance.

The cafe will be open — with a streamlined menu — but Anthony Lakes is asking guests to limit their time inside the lodge to 30 to 45 minutes to ensure everyone has a chance to warm up and fuel up, Judy said.

In his letter, Johnson wrote: “Of course, our staff will be available to guests with families if additional time is needed, but we request that each of our guests respect each other by ensuring people who need a place to sit down and warm up for a bit have it.”

Visitors will be required to wear a face

mask at all times at the resort except while eating or drinking. That includes skiers and boarders wearing a helmet with a visor.

“From the moment you pull into the Anthony Lakes parking lot to when you leave, we are asking (and requiring) face coverings of some sort,” Johnson wrote on the resort's website.

Johnson said he is coordinating the resort's COVID-19 protocols with the Union County Health Department, as the lodge is in Union County.

Updated snow conditions, schedules and events are available at www.anthonylakes.com.

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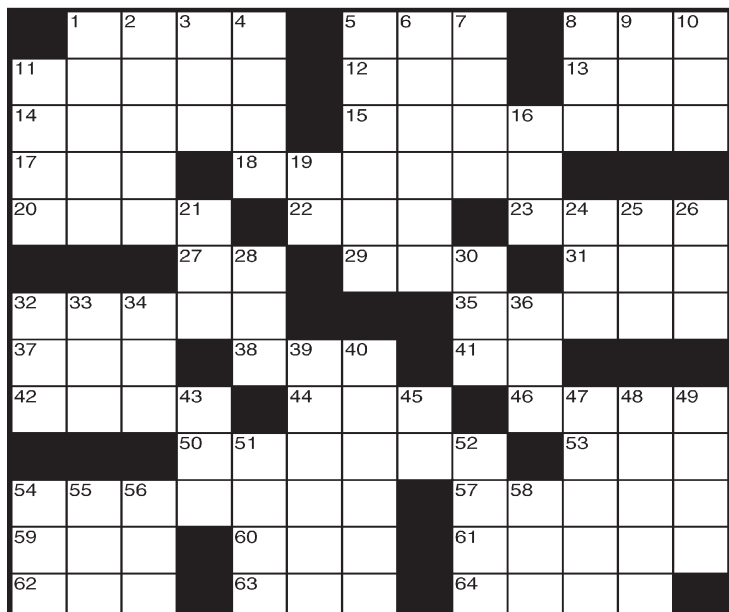
CROSSWORD PUZZLER

- ACROSS**
- 1 Lighter part
 - 5 Female antelope
 - 8 S&L offerings
 - 11 Arm bones
 - 12 Prince Val's son
 - 13 Filbert
 - 14 Battery post
 - 15 Hot pepper
 - 17 Tormé or Gibson
 - 18 Springlike
 - 20 Furtive whisper
 - 22 Keep greedily
 - 23 Feudal estate
 - 27 Mo. fraction
 - 29 Midwest st.
 - 31 Conquistador's quest
 - 32 Solid evidence
 - 35 Seize power
 - 37 Ticket info
 - 38 Flirtatious
 - 41 "Take — There"
 - 42 Noted lava spewer
- DOWN**
- 1 Ebbs
 - 2 Esteemed ones
 - 3 Scotland Yard div.
 - 4 Ukraine's capital
 - 5 Easy-care fabric
 - 6 Halloween hue
 - 7 Gaelic pop star

Answer to Previous Puzzle



- 11-14-20 © 2020 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS
- 8 "Early Start" ailer
 - 9 Demand payment from
 - 10 Sault — Marie
 - 11 Highway exit
 - 16 Wee toymaker
 - 19 "Say what?"
 - 21 Duo
 - 24 Debtor's ltrs.
 - 25 Slip up
 - 26 Vain dude
 - 28 Church's alternative
 - 30 Beg
 - 32 Game or season opener
 - 33 Go bad
 - 34 Purchase
 - 36 Dry, as wine
 - 39 Trial
 - 40 Gives forth
 - 43 Special knack
 - 45 Aircraft engine mfr.
 - 47 Hunter constellation
 - 48 Faint glows
 - 49 Mutant heroes of comics (hyph.)
 - 51 Humorist — Bombeck
 - 52 Three wise men
 - 54 Ingenuity
 - 55 Collection of tales
 - 56 Schuss
 - 58 Move to and —



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