

the REEDD



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Dedicated to Restoring Wild Salmon for Future Generations

Spring Openings

By **KATARINA BUNGE**



April may be a month best known for its showers, but not particularly so on the shores of the Salish Sea. Across western Washington, average rainfall declines in spring and is at its peak in November. In contrast, April's warmth moves like rippling water – imperceptibly coasting along as it gains momentum before it tumbles out into the riotous, open fullness of early summer. While this may be a Northwest perspective, it is not exclusive; one of the most common theories for the origin of April is from the Latin verb, *apirere*, which means “to open.” Verrius Flaccus, a Roman teacher living under Tiberius, recorded that “fruits and flowers and animals and seas and lands do open” in April, thus the name.

Willows and Red-Flowering Currant are two native shrubs which embody this tradition. On an April afternoon, the Red-Flowering

Currant is impossible to miss. Its cascades of pink blossoms are perfectly designed to attract butterflies and hummingbirds, and the human eye. Since David Douglas first sent seeds from this native shrub back to Britain in 1826, it has become one of the most popular ornamental shrubs in the UK, said to have justified his entire five year expedition into what is now recognized as the Salish Sea.

In addition to its ornamental value and value to pollinators, Red-Flowering Currant is an important species in streamside restoration. It is a fast-growing shrub that thrives in disturbed areas, and is also drought-resistant. Although the dusky blue berries are not the most palatable, they are suitable for jams or syrups when sweetened and are widely used by wildlife.

Very unlike the currant, willows open in April almost invisibly. Skagit Fisheries plants

willows for a variety of reasons: they thrive near water, are very hardy, and grow easily. Willows are extremely old – fossils of willow species have been found from the late cretaceous period, or around 66 million years ago, and the plant has been used for medicine since ancient Sumer. Besides traditional folk crafts such as basket weaving, willow wood was historically associated with musicians and poets such as Orpheus, and was used in harp making. Willows are also notoriously hard to identify! Of the hundreds of species of willow around the world, our local favorites include Scouler's, Sitka, Pacific, and Hooker's Willows. An attractive way to use willows in your landscape is by creating a living willow fence or arbor.



LEFT: *Ribes sanguineum* and *Salix* sp. by Katarina Bunge

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ABOVE: Juvenile Chinook parr found during recent spring surveys at Cornet Bay

the REDD

REDD: A female salmon uses her tail to dig a nest in the gravel. After she deposits her eggs the male fertilizes them. The female then covers the fertilized eggs and the resulting nest is called a redd.

MISSION

Our mission is to educate and engage the community in habitat restoration and watershed stewardship to enhance wild salmonids.

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BOARD MEETINGS

The SFEG Board meets the 4th Tuesday of each month. The public is welcome to attend.

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Corps Restoration Assistant*

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From the Director

By **ALISON STUDLEY**

Healthy Watersheds, Healthy Communities.

This is the essence of what we believe at SFEG... By having a healthy watershed ecosystem with abundant self-sustaining wild salmon populations, we will also have thriving, healthy communities. Over the last several months, SFEG has reaffirmed this vision, by going through the process to update our Strategic Plan. Through a series of meetings, surveys and an all-day retreat, two volunteer consultants assisted us in updating our Strategic Plan. Revisiting and updating our Strategic Plan every three to five years helps ensure that we stay focused on the highest priority actions that will best help realize our vision.

To achieve our mission, our two primary goals remain the same: **1)** assisting landowners in restoring habitat to enhance wild salmonid populations and **2)** building partnerships that educate and engage our community in watershed stewardship actions. However reestablishing strategic priorities on where and how we can have the biggest impact in our community is an important facet of the strategic planning process. As new scientific research and different funding sources become available, we are able to better direct our restoration efforts where they can have the greatest benefit to local salmonid resources.

In addition to estuary and floodplain restoration remaining a top priority, a recent analysis of major tributaries has reaffirmed and prioritized the importance of large tributaries for recovering Chinook and steelhead populations in the Skagit. New funding has also helped increase our ability to help landowners correct fish passage problems throughout our region. We expect you will see more work in these areas in the near future.

Examining our ever-changing community allows us to assess how we can best communicate messages about watershed health and stewardship. Over the next few years we hope to continue to strengthen our school programs and also help our community better understand the interdependence of the health and well-being of our human communities with the health and well-being of ocean, estuary and river ecosystems. In order to accomplish all of these goals and objectives, we need to ensure that SFEG remains a robust and financially stable organization that will continue to increase community engagement and be a local leader in salmon recovery efforts. We look forward to your continued engagement as we strive to achieve these important strategic goals.

You can find a copy of our current Strategic Plan on our website: www.skagitfisheries.org.





WANTED: New Truck

SFEG is looking for a truck to replace our 1998 GMC to move our staff, volunteers, and interns to and from project sites located throughout the Skagit and Whidbey Island watersheds.

A truck that fulfills our needs must be 4 wheel drive and have the ability to tow a trailer filled with potted plants.

Ideally, we'd like a truck that has a crew cab, but any sort of extra cab is really helpful.

Donations are gladly accepted, however we are definitely willing to pay for a truck that has a longer life span and is in reasonable shape with a reasonable amount of miles on it.

Washington State
SERVICE CORPS

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

Do you have a passion for the outdoors? Are you excited about the idea of planting trees, dissecting salmon, and working with youth in and out of the classroom? If you are 18-25 years old and answered "yes" to these questions, you may be our next Outreach and Education Associate! Apply by June 29 at <http://1.usa.gov/1HuGCh2>

For more details contact Lucy DeGrace at sfeg@skagitfisheries.org or 360-336-0172

Volunteer Spotlight

PETE HAASE

Somehow, somewhere – several summers ago – I read about upcoming training for “Spawner Survey” work. That is wading a stream in the late fall and winter to count spawning salmon and documenting other information about them. I signed up, went to the training at the Northern State location, met some great folks, and away I went! Since then I have also helped with stream monitoring, which is measuring and recording a lot of aspects and characteristics of a long stretch of a stream. And, I began helping at tree plantings, tree potting parties at the nursery,

and some of the youth education activities. Sometimes I take pictures!

I really enjoy getting out into natural places with interesting people and doing some good. I help the Skagit Land Trust, the Conservation District, the Friends of Skagit Beaches, the Fidalgo Bay Aquatic Reserve Citizen Stewardship Committee and the new Coastal Volunteer Partnership at Padilla Bay. That may seem like a lot, but it is always many old familiar faces just wearing different hats and then many new faces too.

Many years ago I lived in Issaquah on the Pine Lake Plateau before it became the city of Sammamish. It was very rural and wild. We went to the yearly “Salmon Days” and the kids rode horses in the little parade. Those of us living there liked our space and privacy. We paid no attention to the slowly creeping development until it was too late and the place was almost all urbanized.

Now I live in this Skagit place with a lot of rural and wild land. I have learned that salmon – and many other forms of wildlife and sea life – do not do so well with a lot of urbanization. And I have learned that there are always people with a lot of money who want to make more money by building buildings of all sorts wherever they can. I want to do all I can to keep these wild places good for those forest and water creatures and to restore parts of the urbanized places back to a more natural state. I have a very large, extended family. I am happy knowing that they all will remember that and participate as they can too!



LEFT: Pete Haase



Walking Starbird Creek

By **SCOTT PETERSEN**

The first time I walked Starbird Creek, in mid-October last year, I was skeptical. My first thought was, "how could a tiny stream like this with incredibly dark, brown water be something salmon would want to spawn in?" My second thought, as we were walking up the creek, is best not quoted. Choked with bushes, trees and downed logs, and meandering through expanses of mud, it was hard going. Cory Fakkema and Bengt Miller walked me up the creek so I could get an idea of what it looked like, but most importantly how to get out of it and back to my car!

I'm a new Salmon Spawner Surveyor. Last fall my friend Jack Middleton told me about the training session on the first Saturday of October 2014; I was aware of the program from my 2012 Beach Watcher classes and found it appealing. The training was excellent, and when it came time to sign up for a stream I saw Starbird Creek was available. It had only been surveyed the prior season, and it had fish, so I chose it.

A few days after this first walk I accompanied Jack Middleton, Pete

Haase, and Dennis Parent to get more experience, walking their creeks flowing into Lake Samish. They were full of advice (as well as some other things, including the applicable term bloviation), and I learned a lot. Shortly after that I learned that a couple experienced SSS'rs would be joining me on Starbird Creek. Hal Lee, Donald Cleary, and I were off on our adventure through the winter.

Probably the most striking aspect of my experience was how Starbird changed through the season. After a rainy period in early November it transformed into a rushing, anastomosing stream, spreading out and eroding its banks. We found our first fish in late November, and a few more through the end of January. All coho, and not nearly as many as in the previous (first) year it had been surveyed. That's OK, since as a first-timer I was happy just to see some fish underfoot. All and all it was a good and satisfying experience and, believe it or not, I'm looking forward to another fall and winter slogging through mud and wading chest-deep through frigid water!

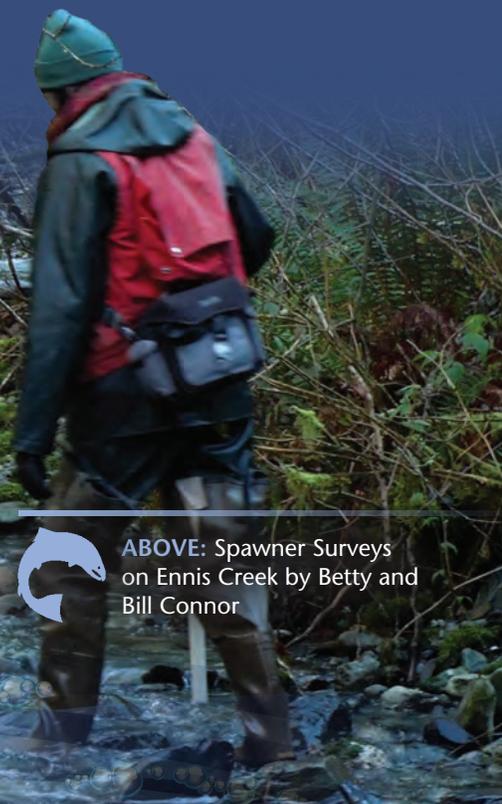
Walking Where Life is Heard

By **BETTY CONNOR**

*Hazy, clear, white water flows
Noisily abounds
Logs in place
Moss green life within
Blankets stones
Covering what was*

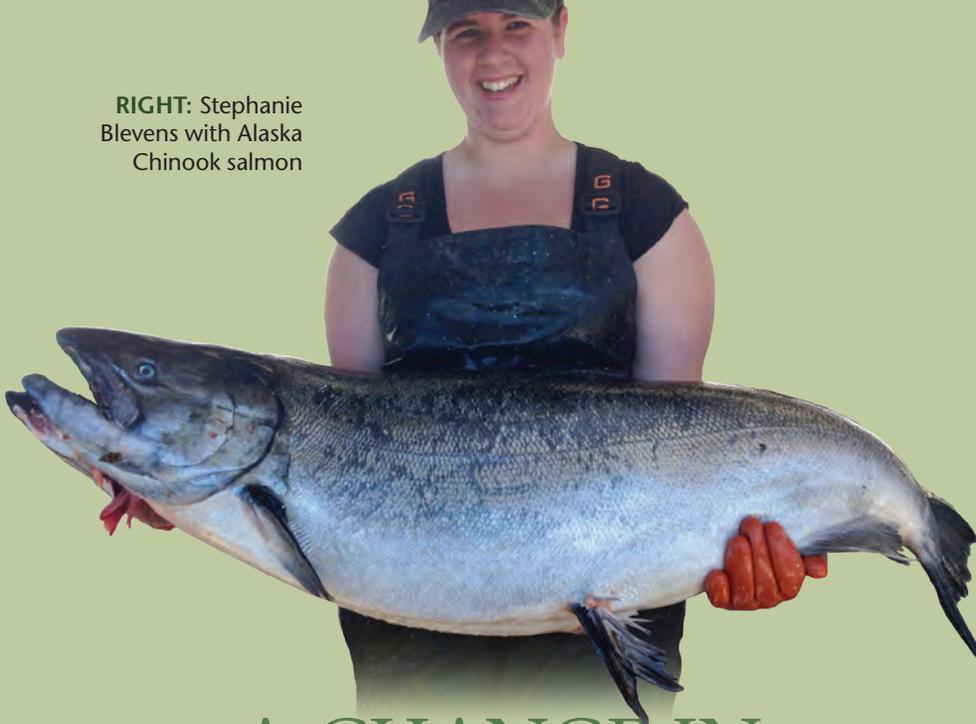
*Tall thin giants leaning toward
Life force below
Liquid earth of living matter
Races to sustain
What is left of ancient times*

*Loud decibels of water runs
Tumbling through river stones
Voices speak but left unheard
Rare places on earth
This message heard.*



ABOVE: Spawner Surveys on Ennis Creek by Betty and Bill Connor

RIGHT: Stephanie Blevens with Alaska Chinook salmon



A CHANGE IN Perspective

By **STEPHANIE BLEVENS**, Skagit Valley College Intern

After spending 15 months in working in Alaska, I have watched an unbelievable amount of fish pulled from the sea. In one summer alone, in Petersburg, AK, I helped process over 68 million pounds of salmon. Boats brought in loads of fish 18 hours a day and I watched almost every single fish go by me on a belt. Then surprisingly, most of the fish were sent to Burlington for distribution, while all of the roe was exported to Japan. It's hard to believe the amount of pressure and worldwide demand we put on our fisheries and it's almost unreal that we haven't completely wiped them out.

This year I was fortunate enough to witness my first spawning salmon and began to take action improving local fisheries. My first time watching salmon making that trek up stream and digging their redds had to be one of the most memorable moments. Even though it was somewhere around 20 degrees in Marblemount that day and my

waders were filling up with that chilly water, I didn't even want to leave. I had the opportunity to walk three streams and see three different species of salmon spawning and it's something I'll never forget.

It has become ever so clear that we have to protect what remains and find a balance between conservation, urbanization, agriculture and the fishing industry. We cannot just rely on our wild fisheries to sustain our insatiable demand for seafood. I am thrilled to be a part of the on going stewardship and restoration of the Skagit Valley and I hope that we can provide a template for functional restoration and sustainable living.

These small populations are part of such a huge infrastructure and combined make up the big picture. We have to value and care for what remains. Watching those salmon come to the end of their incredible journey will forever remain with me as one of my biggest turning points.



IN MEMORIAM

We were saddened to learn of the recent passing of **Jim Thomas**, former SFEG board member.



Jim helped get our potted nursery started way back in spring 2000, when space became available at the Cascades Job Corps campus. Jim showed volunteers and staff how to properly trim

roots, get the plants properly potted, and ensure their growth for future restoration projects. He was a sort of "nursery manager" for us. He taught hundreds of volunteers how to plant trees at restoration sites, how to measure survival and growth of plants, and he regaled us regularly with stories of his fishing trips. Jim will really be missed.



Also recently we lost **Ed Ovenell**, a former SFEG board member and project landowner of the Bob Smith Creek project. In partnership with members of Fidalgo Fly Fishers, SFEG installed log weirs and planted a riparian buffer along this tributary to the Samish River and home to chum salmon. Ed was always game for taking newcomers on a tour of his restoration project, and we remember him being a great friend of salmon!

All the staff and board of SFEG send our deepest sympathies to the Thomas and Ovenell families. Your loved ones left quite a legacy!



Cutthroat Trout

By DAVID BEATTY

Cutthroat trout, *Oncorhynchus clarkii*, exhibit substantial diversity having evolved into numerous subspecies. This diversity resulted from the cutthroat's geographical isolation within separate river basins, especially in the interior of the western United States and Canada. Cutthroat expanded eastward to beyond the Continental Divide to occupy streams and lakes never colonized by rainbow trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss*. Cutthroat diverged into four principal evolutionary lineages represented by four major subspecies, the Coastal (*O. c. clarkii*), the Westslope (*O. c. lewisi*), the Lahontan (*O. c. henshawi*) and the Yellowstone (*O. c. bouvierii*). The latter three subspecies are considered inland subspecies with further divergence of the Lahontan and the Yellowstone.

A characteristic of the coastal cutthroat that differs from the inland cutthroat subspecies is its heavy spotting over the entire body. The historic distribution of cutthroat trout is greater than for any other North American salmon or trout of the genus *Oncorhynchus*. Unlike Pacific salmon and rainbow/steelhead, native cutthroat do not occur in eastern Asia. The coastal cutthroat is distributed along the Pacific Coast from Alaska's Kenai Peninsula to northern California and inland to the crest of the Coastal Mountains in

Alaska and British Columbia and the Cascade Mountains in Washington and Oregon. Its native occurrence is rarely more than 100 miles from the ocean.

The coastal cutthroat has four life history patterns; 1) sea-run (anadromous); 2) non-migratory stream resident (fluvial); 3) freshwater migratory inhabiting larger streams and spawning in smaller tributaries (fluvial-adfluvial); and 4) freshwater migratory inhabiting lakes and spawning in tributaries (lacustrine-adfluvial). The latter three patterns are considered freshwater residents. The coastal cutthroat is the only anadromous subspecies. Juvenile sea-run cutthroat remain in freshwater for two to four years before undergoing the parr-smolt transformation for entry into an estuary/salt water in the spring. Whereas its steelhead cousin migrates extensively in the open ocean for one to three years before migrating back to its natal stream, sea-run cutthroat generally do not migrate very far offshore. Although it does cross into open water, it often stays in or closer to estuaries and the near shore. After several months, it migrates back to the natal stream from August into December to over winter and, if of an age for sexual maturity, it can spawn that spring or in a later spring after again returning from the ocean. Sea-run cutthroat do not die after spawning (iteroparous) and may

spawn again in a following year. The lacustrine-adfluvial pattern produces the largest coastal cutthroat. Sea-runs, even with their relatively long life span and predatory feeding, are usually less than four pounds. Similar to steelhead and resident coastal rainbow where the life history pattern of the parents does not absolutely determine the life history pattern of all offspring, sea-run and resident coastal cutthroat with access to the ocean may produce populations that are a mixture of the sea-run and resident types. Unlike the successful planting of hatchery rainbow throughout the world, attempts to establish cutthroat populations outside its native range have not been very successful.

No populations (Distinct Population Segments) of coastal cutthroat are ESA listed as threatened or endangered (the SW Washington/Lower Columbia population is a species of concern) even though their numbers have significantly declined due to habitat degradation and to hybridization from the stocking of hatchery rainbow and steelhead. However, a few inland cutthroat subspecies were among the earliest ESA listings in 1973. In Skagit County, sea-run cutthroat and resident cutthroat occur in the Skagit River and the Samish River Basins and also in smaller streams with a connection to salt water. The





Resources Available to Help Small Forest Land Owners

Small forest landowners own 3.2 million acres of Washington's forests – about half the private forestland in the state. The Small Forest Landowner Office supports those landowners by offering assistance in promoting the economic and ecological viability of their lands. For details visit www.dnr.wa.gov and **click Forest Practices**

- **Family Forest Fish Passage** assists landowners by replacing culverts and other stream crossing structures that keep trout, salmon, and other fish from reaching upstream habitat.
- **Forestry Riparian Easement** compensates eligible landowners in exchange for a 50-year easement on "qualifying timber."
- **Rivers and Habitat Open Space** acquires permanent forestland conservation easements for unconfined channel migration zones and habitat that is critical for state threatened or endangered species.
- **Forest Stewardship** provides advice and technical assistance to help family forest owners manage their lands.
- **Alternate Plans** allow landowners to apply more site specific flexibility than the standard Forest Practices Rules allow.
- **NEW! Road Maintenance Survey** - The Small Forest Landowner Office is offering **free site reviews** of forest road systems, providing information on road maintenance standards and discussing financial assistance options.

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife reports the occurrence of coastal cutthroat in a few lowland lakes (Clear, Cavanaugh, Campbell and Whistle) and in a relatively small number of higher elevation lakes. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/washington/Species/2310/>

WDFW's trout stocking program is now almost exclusively for rainbow. A popular recreational fishery for sea-runs occurs in the lower Skagit River and sea-runs are caught in Skagit Bay and the nearshore. Always refer to WDFW's Sport Fishing Rules for seasons and restrictions. There is no absolute visual characteristic that distinguishes a coastal cutthroat from a coastal rainbow. The red or orange slash under the lower jaw of cutthroat is a common distinguishing character, but it may occur in some rainbow and does occur in hybrids. However, nearly all cutthroat have hyoid (basibranchial) teeth at the base of the tongue (behind first gill arch), a character rare in rainbow. For further information, I recommend Robert J. Behnke's book Trout and Salmon of North America illustrated by Joseph R. Tomelleri; Free Press, 1st Edition October 2002. ISBN-10: 0743222202



2015 Membership



**SKAGIT FISHERIES
ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

SFEG IS A MEMBERSHIP BASED ORGANIZATION

If you are enjoying reading this newsletter, perhaps it's time that you became a member! Your membership dollars are critical to support the operation of SFEG (including producing this newsletter), allowing us to develop new projects with landowners, providing education programs to kids throughout our watersheds, and collecting monitoring data regarding restoration project sites to document successes.

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Events Calendar *AND* Volunteer Opportunities

Concrete Youth Activity Day

July 9 (Thursday), 12:30-4:30pm,
Downtown Concrete

We can use your help with our educational display as well as a crafty, fishy project for kids to enjoy.

Kids R Best Fest

July 11 (Saturday), 11am-4pm,
Storvik Park, Anacortes

Help with our educational display and a crafty, fishy project for kids to enjoy.

Taylor Shellfishtival

July 15 (Wednesday), 11am-3pm,
Taylor Shellfish, Bow

Help with our educational display and a crafty, fishy project for kids.

Mount Vernon Children's Art Festival

July 18 (Saturday), 10am-4pm, Hillcrest Park

Help with a crafty, fishy project for kids.

Kids in Nature

August 8 (Saturday), 11am-2pm,
Pomona Grange Park

Help with SFEG's macroinvertebrates station, or simply bring the kids for educational fun in the park!

Burlington Back to School Fair

August 22 (Saturday)

Help staff the SFEG educational display and coordinate salmon-related kids' activities at Maiben Park in Burlington.

Fidalgo Bay Day

August 29 (Saturday)

Help staff the SFEG educational display and coordinate salmon-related kids' activities at the Fidalgo Bay Resort.

Skagit River Salmon Festival at Riverfront Park, Swinomish Casino and Lodge

September 12 (Saturday), 10am-7pm

Join us for a FREE fun-filled experience for families featuring: Youth Activities and Crafts, Recreational and Educational Booths, Live Music and Cultural Opportunities, Great Food and Salmon BBQ, Beer & Wine Garden, Commercial Arts & Craft Vendors, And much, much more! More info at www.skagitriverfest.org

SFEG Spawner Survey Workshop

October 3 (Saturday)

Check our website in September for details.