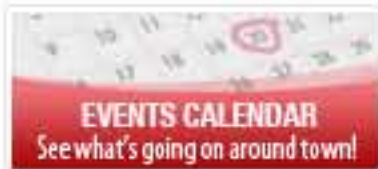


FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2010



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LOCAL NEWS

Local reels in record breaking fish

Angler catches record breaking Chinook off southern tip of Vancouver Island



SEPTEMBER 9, 2010

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Last weekend, local angler Brendan Leeson experienced the ultimate fish tale, only this one happened to be true.

While fishing for salmon in waters off Discovery Island at the southern tip of Vancouver Island, Saturday (Sept. 4), Leeson caught a big one – a really, really big one.

Leeson was attending the annual McMillan fishing derby at Sonora Resort over the weekend, and on Saturday morning launched for a day of angling with his 11-year-old daughter, fishing guide Tommy Thompson and McMillan family member Alex.

He soon hooked something, and after 15 minutes trying to reel it in, he knew it would be substantial.

But he never dreamed how substantial.

“Once we started to see how big it was on the radio it was ‘Oh it’s maybe 40 [pounds], 45, might be 50, might be 60 – Jesus this thing could be over 70!’” said Leeson.

“An hour later fighting in and out in and out, underneath the bow of the boat, a lot of boat action, backing up, going ahead, circling, chasing, coming out of the water... We got it in the boat and it was a big ‘Woo hoo!’”

It was a 72-pound, four-foot-long Chinook.

“It’s pretty impressive. It’s got teeth like a shark,” said Leeson.

By the time they hauled it onboard, at least 30 boats had arrived “like paparazzi,” said Leeson. And it wouldn’t be the last attention he would receive that weekend.

“We get back to the dock and there’s 50 to 70 people jammed at the dock. There were champagne corks and radio ads, it was on news on Global and CTV.”

The catch was a record breaker for the entire region – never has a fish so large been reeled in on the inside of Vancouver Island. And Leeson used a 20-pound test and barbless hook to do it.

“I guess it’s like the Stanley Cup of fishing,” said Leeson. “The guide was weeping – he had a tear in his eye. He’s been fishing 30 years up there and it’s the biggest fish he ever got.”

He laughed that he had bragged to his friends he would catch a fish as big as his 14-month-old daughter, who weighs 21 pounds, and ended up catching one heavier than his 11-year-old daughter.

The story seems to perpetuate the good news of the season for anglers – the boom return of salmon. And it’s definitely good news for Sonora Resort, said Leeson.

“The resort figures it’s about \$20,000 and counting out of the positive publicity. We’ve had calls from Seattle, calls from a couple of guides up in the [Queen] Charlottes that were talking about it.”

The fish will now be replicated in fiberglass and mounted, with one copy going to the resort, another to the McMillan family and a third to Leeson.

“It’s definitely the biggest fish at our little fake lodge,” he laughed. “The members of the Upper Newport Yacht Club are very excited to have a replica in their gazebo.”

It will also be skin mounted and probably hung at the resort, said Leeson.

And there will be some good eating for friends and family as Leeson intends to smoke the estimated 50 pounds of meat. He admits, however, it probably won’t be the best tasting fish since it’s undoubtedly quite old.

The excitement seems to have abated, and when asked if he enjoyed his 15 minutes of fame, Leeson hesitated.

“Hopefully that’s not it,” he said. “I don’t want to be the Al Bundy of the fishing world.”



Photo submitted

Fishing guide Tommy Thompson and the man of the hour, Squamish’s Brendan Leeson, celebrate their catch – a record breaking 72-pound Chinook at the Sonora Resort Saturday (Sept. 4).