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## Salmon Run Times in the Kenai River

By Paul Mrocza

You're about to have your dream come true. You're going fishing on the Kenai River – Alaska's

salmon magnet. The great thing is you actually have two windows of opportunity for each major species – Chinook (King) Salmon, Sockeye (Red) Salmon, and Coho (Silver) Salmon. Having three run times for three types of salmon is unique, making the Kenai River one of the richest sport fishing waterways on the globe.

### Chinook (King) Salmon Run Times

Run times tend to vary a bit from year to year, but they do follow the same basic pattern each year. The initial run of Kings occurs from mid-May to early July and the last starts in early July and ends on July 31. However, as early as April you'll find King Salmon coming into the Kenai River. Although not nearly as plentiful as they will be by the middle of May, Kings are often hooked as early as late April.

This initial run is the smaller of the two, but because the water levels are lower, some people prefer this time of year. The world record for Chinook Salmon was set on the Kenai River during the first run in May. That could be reason enough to plan a trip for the initial migration of Kings.

The second run is focused on the lower part of the river where the salmon have spawned. July first is the designated date for the beginning of the final King run of the season, with large numbers of fish in the river by the end of the first week. Mid-July finds a huge quantity of salmon concentrated in the lower part of the primary channel and attracting a maximum number of sportsmen. Although the river can become crowded with guide boats and fishermen, the Kenai tends to be a very civil place with a party-like atmosphere. It's actually a great time to be on the river with a community of anglers having the time of their lives.

### Sockeye (Red) Salmon Run Times

You'll find the first Red Salmon run starting in late May as they swim through the lower and middle sections of the Kenai on their way to the Russian River, a tributary of the Kenai. The Reds become plentiful right around June tenth, peaking sometime between the fifteenth and twentieth of the month.

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They continue their commute, however in fewer numbers, until the end of the month. Sockeyes are most plentiful in the upper regions of the Kenai.

Beginning in mid-July, the second run of the Reds entices fishermen to take to the banks, standing in crowds 15–20 thick. The Sockeye reach their highest numbers by the third week and then start to dwindle until their migration is over by the end of the month. This atmosphere, when fishermen are virtually packed together angling from a pool of thousands of Reds, is called "combat fishing." It can be a great time for trading fish stories, filling your stringer, and enjoying your sport with fellow enthusiasts.

### Coho (Silver) Salmon Run Times

In late July, the Coho Salmon are starting their journey up the Kenai to spawn. By early August, the Silvers are abundant and fishing is fantastic. The run continues through the month with angling abating

in the fourth week of August. Just a week or so later in early September, the second and final migration of Silver Salmon begins. Large numbers work their way up the river until, at the end of September, the salmon season is officially over.

It's a wild four-and-a-half months on the Kenai with fishermen from across the globe enjoying some of the finest salmon runs they'll ever find. Expert guides adept at helping sports fishermen get the most out of their time on the river help make each visitor's experience something they'll remember and relish for years to come.

Going salmon fishing? You can't beat the Kenai River in Alaska.

This article was written by Paul Mroczka sponsored by

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is a licensed and registered Kenai river fishing guide service providing affordable packages for the novice or experienced fisher. Let the experts at Alaska Fish On tailor the perfect Alaska fishing trip package suited to your needs for your next vacation. Reproductions of this article are encouraged but must include a link pointing back to

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### **Alaska's King Salmon – Tackle And Technique**

**By Paul Mroczka**

The Alaska King Salmon is the official state fish and ultimate prize for any fisherman looking for the

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excitement of landing a big one. King Salmon in the world famous Kenai River are plentiful and huge. Sport fishermen in the Kenai have caught trophy salmon weighing nearly 100-pounds, and it's not unusual for anglers to haul in 40 and 50 pounders. Thousands of people travel to the Kenai River and, with a licensed river guide, pursue its most prized bounty— the King.

What do you use for bait? There are a few types of rigs that are best for attracting Alaska King Salmon. Spin-N-Glows, Vibrex Spinners, and plugs are three effective lures that usually provide optimum results. Two common fishing techniques used on guide boats on the Kenai are back trolling and drifting; while a third and relatively new method called back bouncing is also proving to be effective.

Back trolling usually incorporates Spin-N-Glows and salmon eggs or plugs. Some other effective lures for back trolling are Magnum Wiggle Worts, Flashtrap Spinners, Tadpolllys, Kwikfish and Flatfish. In addition to the lure, you may also, depending upon the current, depth of the water, and location on the river, utilize divers, trolling weights, and diving lures. Baits that move erratically and rotate, especially those that create the illusion of a water creature in distress, will help attract salmon.

When back trolling, the guide has the boat work against the current, running the motor at the same speed or a bit slower than the river. This helps hold the boat in the same position on or to move slowly down the river. The boat should be moving downstream slower than the current while the lures are downstream ahead of the boat. Usually the bait moves close to the bottom of the river with a diver or weight attached 18 inches away from it to allow for proper depth. You'll know you've got a King Salmon on your line when the rod goes down and stays down.

Drifting is similar to back trolling except the bait is allowed to gently bounce off the bottom of the river while the boat drifts with the current. Weights are used to keep the line at the correct depth. This technique is difficult to master since it's not necessarily easy to differentiate between a fish taking the bait and your line hitting off the bottom. A pause in the movement of the line often indicates a hit.

With back bouncing, the bait is bounced off the bottom as the boat is slowly backed over a hole. Sink-N-Glows, a Vibrex spinner or similar lures when properly weighted often yield good results. When fishing, if you feel a tug set the hook chances are there is a salmon there.

If using a plug, you'll want to utilize K-15's or K-16's – you need something large. Divers work well to get the plug to the right depth and colorful, gaudy colors are recommended due to their ability to attract attention.

If you're planning on fishing the Kenai River and can't locate the right type of lure at home, don't worry. Some of these items may not be accessible in your region of the country but bait and tackle shops throughout the Kenai have no lack of Spin-N-Glows, Vibrex spinners, Tadpolllys, Kwikfish and more.

If you elect to book your fishing trip through a licensed guide, you'll find that their knowledge, skill, and supplies will result in a less stressful and a more productive trip. When you go fishing for the Alaska King Salmon you want to exploit every opportunity you have to make your limit, enjoying some of the

best fishing on this earth.

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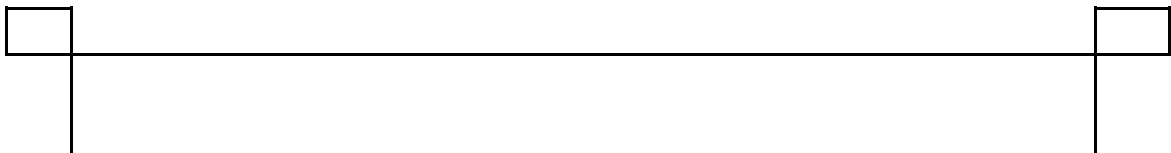
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