

## Kokanee salmon study in Comox Lake seeks local knowledge



By Comox Valley Echo

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Did you know that there are Kokanee Salmon in Comox Lake?

Kokanee are a small salmon that are closely related to Sockeye Salmon, except for the fact that they spend their entire lives in freshwater. They are sometimes referred to as "landlocked Sockeye."

While it is unclear whether Kokanee were present in the lake prior to Sockeye egg transplanting in the 1920s, Kokanee are now considered an important species in Comox Lake, both in the recreational sport fishery and as a key forage fish for cutthroat trout.

Not much is known about the Comox Lake watershed Kokanee life history, and overall population. A local study is underway to try and better understand the timing, spawning preferences and habitat selection of Kokanee Salmon.

This multi-year project, made possible with funding from the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) started in early September, 2016. The FWCP is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and public stakeholders to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife impacted by the construction of BC Hydro dams.

Local fisheries biologists Esther Guimond and Caroline Heim are heading up the study in partnership with the Courtenay and District Fish and Game Protective Association, and with support from the K'omoks First Nation Fisheries Guardians.

Some of the objectives of the study are to map key spawning areas, and to monitor the incubation period (while eggs are in the gravel) to get a better understanding of survival.

Tapping into local knowledge is important for this project. We are asking for anyone with information about current and historical sightings of Kokanee to contact Esther or Caroline with your information at our "Kokanee Hotline".

Call Caroline at 250.890.1786 if you have ever noticed Kokanee, or if you see them this fall. If you frequent the lake, or have a cabin up there and have any information tips, we want to hear from you!

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