

Silver Hilton Steelhead Lodge

December 2009

Post-season 2009

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The Inside Story from Lani

Now that the 2009 season is past, it is time for our annual Christmas letter and update about fishing on the Babine.

I suppose if I had to sum up our season, I would say that it seemed a perfect example of the way things can change and completely surprise us. For example, the early Tyee test reports said that this looked like it would be one of the best years in the past decade. Steelhead counts were high and so were our expectations. In fact, this year was predicted by some to be even better than our banner season of 2008.

So we showed up right on time and opened our doors on September 3rd with great expectations. The river looked good – a little off color but well within decent boundaries for good fishing. The guests this week were all new to Silver Hilton and they “got with the program” in a hurry. Water temperatures were excellent and hovered around 53 degrees for the entire week.

This, of course, meant the fish were at their peak of health and strength and almost all of them were truly “red-hot”, and even six pounders went screaming down river on long runs and, as always in the early weeks, the steelhead this week were certainly willing to come to a floating pattern.

Big fish honors went to Charlie Ewell of La Jolla, California, who took a gorgeous trophy

buck of 25½ pounds on a wet fly, on river left of Bonanza pool. We found, in fact, decent numbers of fish on the Triple Head beats almost from the beginning, which gave credence to the Tyee estimates of good numbers of early fish this year.

Another highlight was Chuck Rund of Grants Pass, Oregon, who got out of the boat on the last hour of the last day of Week 1 and proceeded to land one fish of twenty-three pounds, another just under twenty, and a third, a real monster, which he couldn't hold. When we came around the corner and saw Chuck standing his ground, we learned that all three fish were hooked in almost the exact same place, on a twenty foot cast.

After Chuck landed his third fish, the twenty-three pounder, and told us the stories of the other two, I looked at Aaron Henderson and asked, “Does this place have a name, and is it always like this?” He paused, smiled his best guide smile, and said “Ohhh... You betcha!” I thought about it, then looked back and said, “Well, maybe we could call it ‘You Betcha’.” Aaron broke out with another of his gleaming guide smiles and said, “You Betcha,” as the dark sky opened up with a shower of cold rain and gathering clouds. At the end of the week, the eight anglers at Main Camp hooked 61 steelhead and landed 37. Triple was closed for this week. So we were off to a good start.



But it kept raining and Week 2 entered with a rush of rising water, but long-time experts John Rogers, Rob Gilbert, Sam Benedict, Jon Dee and Ron Mallory and others unpacked and hit the river with a gleam in their eyes. It was tough! The river stayed dirty almost all week and the group later told me that they simply could not tell just how many fish were really around.

Jim Wilson, however, didn't care as he hit the jackpot on the river right of Spey Run with the fish of a lifetime. His fly stopped as if hung on the bottom and, over a half an hour later, Wilson almost faints when he sees his thirty-one pounder slide to shore. Congratulations to Jim for a truly incredible catch. A great wall fish for Silver Hilton and for Jim.

Things were also tough upriver on the Triple Header beat. David Stone, Julian Smith and Charles Smid “gave them hell”, but had less than usual good fishing. The river simply would not shape-up. Cont'd





Silver Hilton – Main Camp



Even mans best friend,
Maggie, enjoys a day on the
river

“...of all the liars
among mankind, the
fisherman is the most
trustworthy.”
William Sherwood Fox

Pricing 2010

Weeks 1 & 9 \$4,750 plus \$250 Save the Babine - \$5,000

Weeks 2 – 8 \$6,850 plus \$250 for Save the Babine - \$7,100

At going to press we have heard that in 2010 Canada Revenue are imposing an HST tax which will impact your payment. More information will follow when we know more.

Payment 2010

Your invoice will be mailed to you on January 5, 2010. Payment in full by check only is due February 1, 2010. Any space not paid for by this date will be filled from our list of clients who want to change their weeks. Requests for changes will be made based on yours of seniority.

Cancellation Policy

We cannot make refunds unless your space is re-sold. We will do all within our power to resell your slot.

Unfortunately, as the Committee to Preserve the Babine River Wilderness, known as Save the Babine, is a charitable organization, we cannot refund contributions once a “Thank You” letter has been mailed out.

Leave of Absence

According to our booking policy, all clients are granted three years leave of absence. This policy will continue in 2010, and if you have already used your three years leave, and if you do not re-book your slot in 2010, you will lose your space and your seniority. A new leave of absence policy will be in effect for the 2011 season. You will be advised of that and other changes for the 2011 season some time in the summer of 2010.

Changes in your Reservation

If you do not want the week you have been invoiced for (your permanent reservation) and wish to change your week, you must contact me as soon as possible and give me the week you want to move into. Requests can be made over the phone, or in writing, or in an e-mail. I will transcribe your request onto a “Change in Reservation” form. I keep these requests on hand and refer to them daily as vacancies come up. Placements are based on your year of seniority.

You may pay for your regular week and simultaneously request a change to

a different week if it becomes available. You will be changed to that week if it is available and if you have more seniority than the other guests who request that space.

If you do not have a permanent reservation at Silver Hilton and fished there in 2009 as a one-year fill-in, and you want to secure a permanent reservation, please contact me by February 2, 2010 and I will then know what is available. Here again, I will transcribe your request onto a “Change in Reservation Request” form and this form will be consulted whenever openings become available. ☺

Lani's letter cont'd

So Week 2 ended up with 45 hooked at Main Camp, and 31 landed. Triple Header hooked 25 and landed 16. Had the river stayed in shape, things would have been much better, for the fish were there, but hard to find in the dirty currents.

Week 3 opened up with continued dirty water and for almost the entire week the guests fished in cloudy currents. Triple Header fishing was also tough and you had to get philosophical about it.

Main Camp hosted Chris Travis and his two camera-men filming a documentary about the value and magic of the Skeena system steelhead resources. We managed to get some great footage and Canadian Run saved our bacon with consistently decent fishing if you worked at it, and in the end we got the footage we needed to tell the story of these magnificent steelhead. As part of the deal we did not mention the name of the river or even publicize Silver Hilton. As we all know, there is growing rafter pressure from the outside world and we did not want to open the door any further with accolades about how good the Babine River is.

Dale Jessup took a great fish from river left of Upper American Run on a fifteen foot cast. The huge buck was lying in about two feet of

cloudy water right next to shore and it couldn't resist Dale's Popsicle which drifted right where it had to be for the fish to see it. This is a good reminder that they aren't all on the other side of the river. Congratulations to Dale for our second wall fish of the year, a genuine thirty pound steelhead, and another fish of a lifetime.

Phil "Permit" Carson also had a banner day during his visit and took five fish in water so dirty Phil said he didn't even know where he was standing.

So Week 3 ended up tough with 58 hooked and 43 landed at Main Camp, and 21 hooked with 13 landed at Triple Header.

Week 4 got interesting! The river finally cleared and stayed relatively warm – the perfect combination. Steve Myers didn't waste any time and went four for five at Trotters Pool on changeover day. One of the most exciting things about this time frame was the fact that long-time steelhead dry fly addict, Paul Fitzgerald, who fishes only the dry fly, burned up the river. Paul took 25 fish on a dry in Week 4, an amazing accomplishment, but if anyone can do it, Paul can.

So Week 4 turned out very well and the guests at Main Camp hooked 147 and landed 100 of these. Triple Header's

four anglers hooked 56 and landed 38.

Week 5 also went well for Steve and his second group of anglers. Tom O'Neill hooked six and landed all of them on the first guided day, and five of these were on dry flies. Jeremy Myers took a beautiful 20 ½ pound fish for his first ever steelhead.

Congratulations Jeremy! The lodge did some exploring downriver and Steve took a good fish on a dry fly at a new run we have called "Survivor". Giana Allen took two nice bucks for the week, including a 20 ½ pound fish out of "Billy Goat" run.

In the end, Week 5 produced 129 fish hooked at Main Camp, with 81 landed and 40 hooked at Triple Header with 28 of these landed.

The week of October 8-15, Week 6, was one of the strangest in recent memory, and it went from a euphoric high to the bottom of the well, so to speak. For example: on changeover day the four anglers at Triple Header – Lou Rago, Paul McCracken, William Kiefel and Jeff Evershed thought they had died and gone to heaven! They hooked and landed five fish on their own.

Things were equally crazy at Main Camp and on change-over day Randy Labbe and his merry band of piscatorial pranksters hooked.... Cont'd



Dale Jessup's 30 pounder caught in poor conditions



Jeremy Myers with one hooked



Jim Wilson's 30 ½ pounder



Lani Waller, Aaron Henderson & David Holland
Our guides hard at work!

“There he stands, draped in more equipment than a telephone lineman, trying to outwit an organism with a brain no bigger than a breadcrumb, and getting licked in the process.”
☞ Paul O’Neil, 1965



John Meighan landing his 29 lb steelhead

Lani’s letter Cont’d

twenty steelhead – on their own and without any guiding at all.

The next day – the first day of guided angling – Triple Header hooked 22 and landed 16 Babine Steelhead. The Main Camp hooked 30 and it indeed seemed like steelhead paradise. So, in the first two days of fishing there were 77 steelhead hooked by the lodge and the twelve guests. Then it happened! The weather that is. Air temperatures plummeted and it began to snow. It began to freeze rods and reels, fingers and toes.

“The bite went off”, as they say, and the going got tough, tougher, and stayed that way.

Big fish honors went to Rod Peck with a 26 pound buck from Eagle run. Mike Davis took a notable steelhead of 22 ½ pounds on a floating line. At the end of the week Main Camp had hooked 131 and landed 89. Triple Header had their best week of the season with 58 hooked and 47 landed.

When it finally warmed up it was already Week 7. Bob Gloger, Jeff Spur, Ray Elliott, Tom Keelin, Roland Lohman, John Meighen, Hugh Ball and Rob Arnold hit the Main Camp like a band of hungry steelheaders looking for their annual

Babine fix. Up river at Triple Header, Joe and Ken Buechler, Dave Brett and Steve Lewis also jumped in with high hopes.

All in all it was a very decent week indeed, with 168 fish hooked at Main Camp, and 122 landed. When you think about it, that’s more than decent; that is world-class steelhead angling and this week ended up being the best of our season.

One of the highlights occurred at Eagle. Bob Gloger and Jeff Spur hooked 11 fish and landed 8 of them in less than two and a half hours. John Meighen landed a 40” x 22” fish at Paradise that weighed 29 pounds – one for “The Cup”. Congratulations John! Roland Lohman also worked his magic and took 4 fish in one day on a floating line at Survivor.

October 22-29, Week 8, began to slow down. The Babine ran cold again with water temperatures in the mid thirties. Babine regulars, John Dale and Tom Griffin, had great moments with two truly beautiful Babine Steelhead. John took a 21½ pound buck out of Fergie’s Run, and Tom took what would be the biggest hen of the year – another great steelhead of the same exact weight as John’s buck – a

bright and heavy hen of 21 ½ pounds.

The Stivers clan up at Triple Header worked hard for their fish and, as always, it paid off. Mike Stivers “made the cup” with a heavy and beautiful 26 pound buck landed at Jack’s Run. At the end of the week, Main Camp hooked 70 fish and landed 51. Triple Header hooked 33 and landed 20.

We wrapped it up, as always, on our last week of our nine week season – October 29- November 5. The weather was mild and no ice hung from the rods or noses of the guests at Main Camp. A couple of new anglers showed up so there were some sparklers at the evening meal. Triple Header is normally closed this week, and our six anglers at the Main Camp, including long-time Silver Hilton guests Taft Ring and Bob Goodale, as well as Jerry Gospodnetich, Gart Simpson, Steve Holick and John Rogers, and a good time was had by all!

In fact, there was a little wine left at the bar at the end of the week... congratulations were offered all the way around for the six anglers who hooked 42 fish and landed 30. ☞

Conservation News

The Babine River Foundation along with our allies, The North Coast Steelhead Alliance and Friends of Wild Salmon and the Skeena Region First Nations tribes, all remain on the job in the fight to keep the aquaculture fish farms out of the coastal approach waters of the Skeena. So far, so good, and there are no fish farms in our area yet. But the fight continues and will do so for years to come.

The three Babine River lodges continue to fund the Babine River Foundation through our clients' payments for "Save the Babine". These funds are then matched by the Provincial government and these donations remain critical for our continued work in protecting the wild strains of Babine River steelhead. So, thanks to all of you for this support, including those of you who have quietly, and without publicity, made additional contributions to the cause.

We are also monitoring the logging plans of our area and the BRF has funded critical projects such as mapping and data analysis of proposed cut blocks etc. in our area. When something looks bad on paper, it usually is, and these maps provide us with an historical perspective of past activities and their relevance for new plans and proposals in our area.

The BC Provincial Government is also considering the implementation of an Angling Management Plan for the Skeena system in order to deal with the pressure on some of the Skeena rivers during peak times of the season. This has been a heated debate, with a lot of hard feelings because the government is suggesting that the number of non-resident, non-guided anglers should be reduced through restrictions and lotteries, etc.

If these restrictions become law, we will not be adversely affected because our rod day

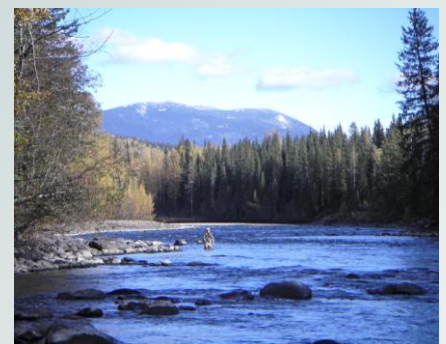
allotments are already defined and curtailed by law. It may, in fact, reduce the number of floating anglers who come down the Babine in late September. As things now stand, there are no limits on the number of anglers who can camp out and float down the Babine River. I also believe we are now in a stronger position environmentally than ever before.

The Babine River has, indeed, become more famous and even rarer as steelhead angling in other parts of the Pacific Northwest continues to deteriorate.

Our anglers are also more aware of the issues and, in the best sense of the word, they have evolved into a much better informed, caring and wiser angler than our guests had been in the early years. So, it seems that we have changed, we have grown up and we are indeed where we want to be – protecting a river we love and care about. ☺



The Beautiful Babine River



Lani's Books on Tape and Christmas Special

As most of you know, I like to talk about, and dream about fishing. I now have two books in print, and a four-film DVD set available for a Christmas Special. The two books have also recently been recorded by myself, and will soon be available in audio form. So let me know if you are interested in a special Christmas gift for someone. If you are a Silver Hilton guest, the price is right! ☺

"Fishing is much more than fish. It is the great occasion when we may return to the fine simplicity of our forefathers."

☺ Herbert Hoover

Bookings & Reservations for 2010 and Beyond

"Man and fish are alike. They both get into trouble when they open their mouths."

☞ Anon

As you undoubtedly know, this will be my last season as exclusive booking agent for Silver Hilton. It has been a remarkable journey for thirty years now, with a lifetime of great memories.

In the time since that beginning much has changed. In 1979 it cost \$750 US to fish the Babine. Now it is obviously almost ten times greater. To those who lament this kind of change, I would

offer the following; the best and the rarest always costs more, and I knew it would someday be this way for British Columbia steelhead. Fishing was, in those days, embarrassingly under-priced and under valued.

I remember telling the early guests that if they wanted to look into the future and see what was going to happen to the Babine twenty years from then, all they had to do

was to look as what had happened on the Great Atlantic Salmon rivers and camps, for I knew the many similarities between trophy BC steelhead, and the best of Atlantic Salmon rivers would produce a similar development on the great BC steelhead rivers... especially, the crown jewel, the one-and-only Babine.

The fishing has remained as good as ever. In fact, it seems

that there are more large fish taken now than we ever saw in the past. Our numbers of fish have remained steady, with a seasonal average of around 1,000 steelhead hooked. Some years have been better and some have been worse, and we have smaller fish than we used to (for reasons beyond me and the biologists I have talked to). But the big picture is still clear: if you want the best

there is, you go to the Babine and you stay at the Silver Hilton Steelhead Lodge.

In the end, the history of the Babine and Silver Hilton, the character of the guests, our staff and Steve Myers' tenure as owner, have all left their mark, and our annual pilgrimage to, what I believe is the greatest steelhead river and lodge in the world goes along with the best of values

and principles – which leads me to this: I am still a part of this, I am not disappearing. I will continue to fish at Silver Hilton each season and will continue to help in any way I can to protect the watershed and to be a part of its history.

But in truth it is time for me to step aside and turn the day-to-day management of reservations and booking policies into other hands, and



One of Charlie Ewell's fish got away – but he caught a gorgeous 25 ½ trophy buck in Week 1

I will officially retire from this position on August 31, 2010. At that time Brian Schneider will take over for me and he will assume full and complete executive responsibility for all Silver Hilton reservations and booking policies, Invoicing will be done by Fly Water Travel of Ashland, Oregon. The details of these reservation policies for 2011 and beyond will be sent in a newsletter some time during the summer of 2010.

I would also like to express my thanks to all of you who have become my friends and a greatly valued part of my past business and fishing odyssey. It wouldn't have been the same without you. I'd also like to thank Eileen Davidson, Silver Hilton's Executive Secretary and all round problem solver and woman-on-the-job for all she has done this past eleven years. Thanks again also go to Steve Myers for his unflagging commitment to conservation, to

the lodge and staff, and for his tolerance during those times when I acted like I owned the lodge. Steve was very patient, and gave me the personal and professional room I needed to maneuver and negotiate on behalf of Silver Hilton and the Babine River. ☞



Bill Kiefel says "Goodbye! till next year!"

2009 Catch Records

	Main Lodge		Triple header	
	Hooked	Landed	Hooked	Landed
Week 1	61	37	closed	closed
Week 2	45	31	25	16
Week 3	58	43	21	13
Week 4	147	100	56	38
Week 5	129	81	40	28
Week 6	131	89	58	47
Week 7	168	122	42	31
Week 8	70	51	33	20
Week 9	42	30	closed	closed
Total hooked	1,126			
Total landed	777			

Questionnaires

We really appreciate your time and effort in completing the annual questionnaire before your departure from camp. We really do read them all - and we take note. In fact, there have been times when we have implemented changes before the end of a season solely on your recommendations. So please keep them coming!

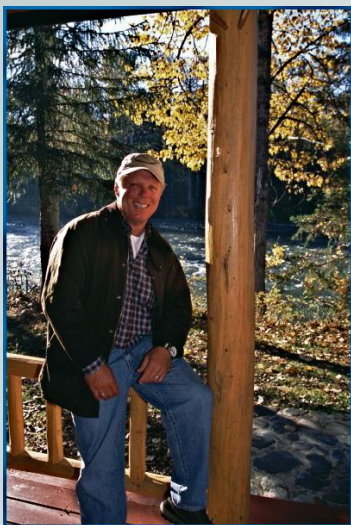
"Give a man a fish and he has food for a day; teach him how to fish and you can get rid of him for an entire weekend"

☞ Zenna Schaffer

License purchase – on-line

This year saw the implementation of a new way to purchase your angling license – via the internet.

I think you'll agree that it went off mostly without a hitch but if you have any problems in future years, please don't hesitate to contact us. ☞



A Note from Steve Myers

Dear Friends & Clients:

We had, as usual, a truly wonderful season at Silver Hilton this year. There were some spectacular catches and many meaningful memories for all of us.

We keep doing our very best to make your experience a truly memorable event and in this respect I'd like thank the lodge management and staff, along with the support of Cynthia Schneider in Smithers and Lani Waller, our booking agent, for all their great work in 2009.

Here's looking forward to another fantastic season in 2010.

Best Regards,
Steve Myers



Chris Buckley in Week 3



Mark McAneeley
Making sure all goes well

Silver Hilton Steelhead Lodge

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30-Pounder Club

This year we had two new members to the Thirty-Pounder club. Jim Wilson in Week 2 with a 30 ½ lb. fish caught in Spey River right, and Dale Jessup who caught a 30 lb. steelhead in Upper American pool. Congratulations to both anglers.

Jim and Dale will be added to the wall in time for opening next season.

In our next newsletter we will list all member of the Thirty-Pounder Club.

25-Pounders

Five guests will have their names added to the cup this year for fish caught between 25-30 lbs:

Charlie Ewell – Week 1 – Bonanza RL
Larry Bijou – Week 4 – Blue Flag
Rod Peck – Week 6 – Eagle
John Meighen – Week 7 – Paradise
Mike Stivers – Week 7 – Triple Header

The cup is being sent away to have more space added and the new names will be engraved and on show in time for next season. Well done all!

Credits

We'd like to give thanks and recognition to the photographers whose pictures were featured in this edition. So thanks go to:

Ken Moorish of Flywater Travel

The guides Mark McAneeley, David Holland and Aaron Henderson

And all the guests who took pictures for our files.

We had too many great photographs to put in the Newsletter this time, but they'll all be up on www.silverhilton.com very soon.



John Dale is very happy with his catch!



Paul Wagner with a beautiful steelhead



Giana Allen with a great one for the photo album