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Salmon carcass in Battle Creek estimated at 85 pounds

By Dylan Darling

Posted November 4, 2008 at midnight

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Salmon-zilla

It sounds like a typical fish story.



But the state scientists who found an estimated 85-pound chinook salmon have the photos to support their whopper.

"We see lots of big ones," said Doug Killam, associate fisheries biologist in state Department of Fish and Game's Red Bluff office, "but this one was just bigger than most big ones - it was just spectacular."

In dodging commercial and sport fishers. Because of recent low returns of fall-run Chinooks to the Sacramento River system, the big fish was protected from the latter. In a photo of the monster fish find last week on Battle

Creek near Anderson, Killam strains to hold the spawned-out salmon. Federal and state officials called off a commercial salmon fishery this year off the state's coast and are allowing nothing but a short sport season in the Sacramento River because of the low runs. "If someone would have caught this one, it probably would have been a state record," Killam said.

"A fish that big would have been caught in the fishery," Smith said. Measuring in at 51 inches - 4 1/4 feet - long, the male salmon was likely five to six years old, Killam said. Scientists used the salmon's girth and length to come up with their estimate of 85 pounds - and that's dead. The salmon probably weighed about 90 pounds alive when it started its swim from the Pacific Ocean back to Battle Creek, caused by the lack of an upwelling, where winds over the ocean draw up water laden with krill and other tiny foods that are gobbled by growing salmon. Once they make it past two years old, the salmon palate changes and they dine on herrings, sardines and other small fish.

A guide for more than 10 years on the Sacramento, Richey said the biggest salmon Although monstrous, the salmon found on Battle Creek is part of a meager salmon one of his clients has caught is a 52-pounder and the state record was an 88-pound run on the stream that feeds Coleman National Fish Hatchery. This year's fall-run has chinook caught on the Sacramento in 1979. been about 13,000 fish, said Scott Hamelberg, the hatchery's manager.

Not only is the fish found on Battle Creek in the league with that record catch, it's also Average runs at the hatchery have been between 20,000 and 30,000 fish, close to biggest sport chinook salmon ever caught in the country - a 97-pounder caught on Alaska's Kenai River in 1986, said Jim Smith, a project leader for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Red Bluff. But Hamelberg said the run has been "awesome" because it will produce enough eggs - about 15 million - for the hatchery to release its goal of 12 million smolts next spring.

The size of a salmon is a result of its genetics, its food intake in the ocean and its luck

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While the hatchery gets its share of big fish, Hamelberg said he's never seen an 80-pounder.

"The biggest one we saw in the spawning building so far (this year) was 53 pounds," he said.

Reporter Dylan Darling can be reached at 225-8266 or ddarling@redding.com.

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November 4, 2008
5:49 a.m.

churn72 writes:

in response to **Williwaw:**

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look again..

November 4, 2008
6:05 a.m.

justaguy writes:

First citation of the day from the spelling police goes to Dylan! "the salmon pallet" should surely be "the salmon palate" (unless they get their food delivered).

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November 4, 2008
6:28 a.m.

BANDOLERO58 writes:

I remember the whopper caught in 1979, I was there. Why wasn't this carcass weighed? I'll tell you why, this salmon would come in at about 65 lbs.

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November 4, 2008
November 4, 2008
6:49 a.m.

Baseball writes:
secondclass writes:

in response to **keponbiking:**

Did it have an adipose fin? They cut off the adipose fin to mark hatchery spawned fish. There is an ongoing controversy about the fraction of fish caught which are naturally or hatchery spawned. Sacbee had an article with great pictures showing how they are now tagging some of the hatchery fish. A small study of otoliths contradicted many decades of data from the adipose fins.

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November 4, 2008
November 4, 2008
7:13 a.m.

BO writes:
humbug writes:

a MONSTER!
Can't they just give the fish to the needy, adipose fin and all??

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November 4, 2008
November 4, 2008
8:24 a.m.

Soldier_X writes:
i5trucker writes:

Well, as the overall number of Salmon declines, I would imagine that there is a greater number of brook trout in the spawning salmon. I've been in good luck. The two 35 pounders I have caught took almost an hour each to reel in.

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November 4, 2008
9:47 a.m.

easyoneall writes:

Wow!! Talk about awesome!!!
justaguy writes:

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Yes it does have an adipose fin, see

Blood Source

Good News Rescue Mission

Auxiliary meetings

Contact for Location Information

Monthly DAR Meeting

11 a.m.

Redding Library

Let's Talk Parenting

6 p.m.

Mercy Medical Center

Need2Read fundraiser

7 p.m.

Need 2 Speed Indoor Kart Racing

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