

## A Complete Guide on the Effective Techniques for

# KOKANEE

## LANDLOCKED SOCKEYE SALMON

Kokanee salmon were experimentally introduced into several lakes and reservoirs in western North America in the mid-1940s. The success of these introductions has since blossomed into a growing sport fishery in the west and has spread to many eastern waters as well.

Continued planting and new introductions throughout the United States will see an increasing number of anglers pursuing these sporting, tasty, landlocked sockeye salmon.

Successful kokanee fishing is an art. There are many documented cases where high concentrations of kokanee exist in a lake but where sport harvest is minimal. An understanding of kokanee habits, fishing methods, their preference for specific water temperatures and their life cycle is necessary in order to obtain consistent results and to catch fish where other anglers are failing. This Tech Report will provide you with that information.

Lakes of the Pacific coast, Siberia and Japan were the original homes of kokanee salmon, which, for one reason or another, became landlocked and unable to migrate to the ocean like their cousins the sockeye salmon. The kokanee spends its entire life cycle in fresh water and dies after spawning as does the anadromous (lives and matures in salt water and spawns in fresh water) sockeye.

There are many strains of kokanee, depending on the particular parent sockeye salmon run which contributed to the landlocked variety. Today, hatcheries and egg-taking sites on reservoirs, where kokanee runs now occur, regularly provide millions of eggs to fish and wildlife agencies, many of which are shipped to the northeast and east to supplement trout fisheries.

### LIFE CYCLE

Kokanee are also known as silver trout, bluebacks, sockeye, silversides and redbfish. They have a life cycle which spans from two to seven years, depending on the particular strain, with most reaching adulthood in four years as do other salmon. They are late summer or fall spawners that choose tributaries, outlet areas or the gravels around the shoreline of a lake in which to complete their life cycle.

Growth and size in a particular body of water depends upon the abundance of plankton, their major food source, and also upon the

numbers of other fish species competing for this food. Adult kokanee will range in size from 8 to 20 inches with most in the 9- to 14-inch class. Larger lakes and reservoirs where concentrations are small, produce the largest fish, some to three and four pounds. Insect larva or nymphs may become food sources, but not in preference to plankton. Thus, when a lure or bait is used to tempt kokanee into hitting, it must be small and must appeal to the fish in both color and movement.

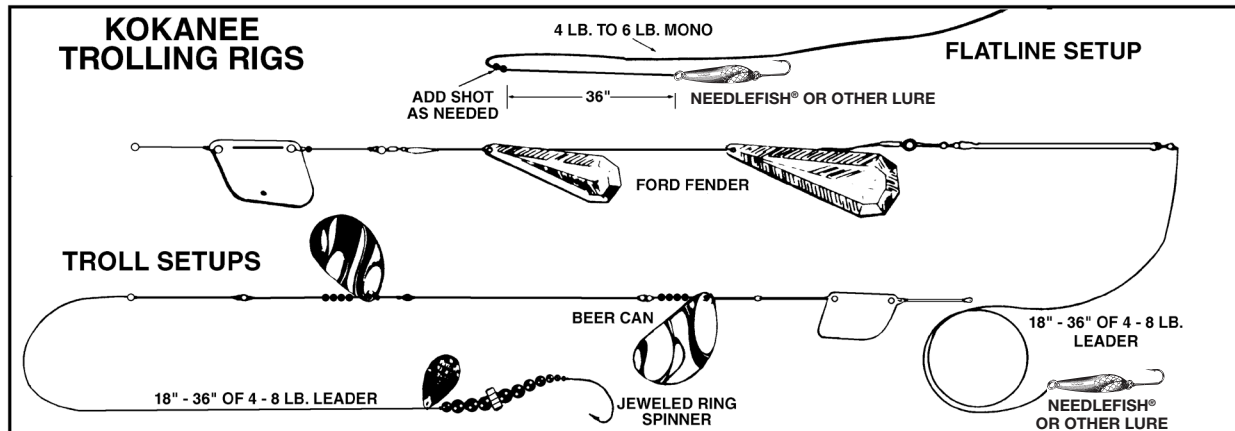
### PREFERENCES

Kokanee prefer water temperatures of 50° or colder, which is why many anglers fail to catch them. In some lakes they will spend the summer concentrated in a very narrow band of 50° water. If an entire lake is warmer than 50°, they will be found close to the bottom or near underwater springs or in old river channels, wherever the coolest water is available.

Once you've located the right water temperature layer and a school of fish within that zone, kokanee can be caught with a variety of lures. The most popular lure colors are Nickel/Red Head, Fire/Pearl, Rainbow and Pearl/Red Head. Trolled spoons, spinners or small plugs behind lake trolls such as the Beer Can or Ford Fender or Jeweled Bead Kokanee Troll should be tipped with a small piece of worm, maggot, grub, salmon egg, or white or yellow corn kernel. Some anglers add a strand of white or chartreuse yarn to the hook for added attraction.

### KOKANEE TROLLING TECHNIQUES

Trolling is the most consistently productive technique for catching kokanee as you are able to cover a large water area in a short period of time, thereby locating the schools most efficiently. Lake trolls, flatlines, leaded lines and sinking fly lines are four productive ways to troll for kokanee (see illustrations above), depending on the time of year and level of the 50° temperature zone. In spring and fall when kokes are near the surface, flatlines, small trolls without added weight and slow-sinking or floating fly lines often are used. In summer when the fish head for deeper water, leaded lines and large (sometimes weighted) lake trolls are needed to reach the right temperature zone.



## FLATLINE

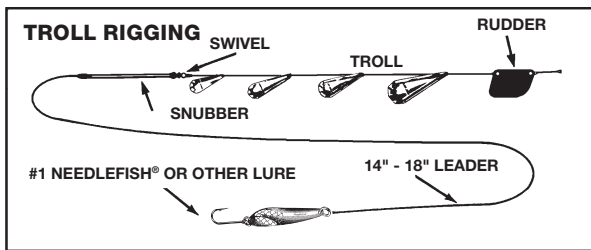
Flatlining is the term used to describe a technique whereby a small troll, lure or lure tipped with bait is worked in the top 10 feet of water with no or very little weight. It is particularly adaptable to light tackle where 4- to 8-lb. test main line is commonly used and is a method wherein the lure is let out behind the boat and trolled close to the surface.

Most anglers find trolling a spinner, Needlefish®, Kokanee King, Super Duper or Hot Shot® behind the lake troll (the Jeweled Bead Kokanee Troll works great for this) with one or two split shot 18 to 60 inches up the line from the lure a very effective kokanee technique when the fish are near the surface in the spring and fall. The flatline technique can also be used with good results in conjunction with floating or slow-sinking fly lines, utilizing 15 to 25 feet of 4- to 6-lb. test mono as leader and the same lures and split shot arrangement as suggested above.

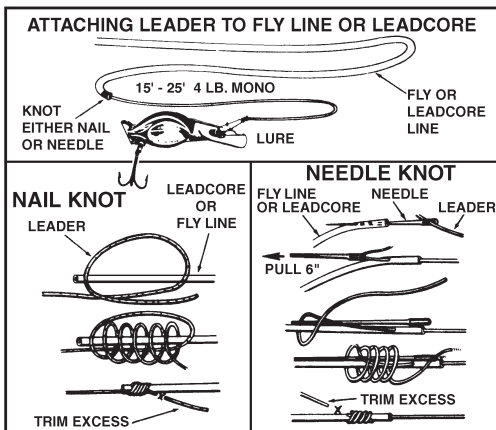
## LAKE TROLLS

Trolls (a series of flashing blades) are especially effective for kokanee in medium to deep water or on days with overcast skies. Small trolls can be flatlined with the larger models geared for deeper running. The "Kokanee Trolling Rig" (with rudder, Ford Fender troll, snubber, leader and No. 1 Rainbow Needlefish), Beer Can and Dave Davis® lake trolls are deadly for kokanes and should be rigged as illustrated. A troll appeals to several fish feeding instincts providing flash and visual attraction and, particularly in the case of kokanee, the flash represents other kokanes feeding. When trolled, the blades act as attractors, kokanee follow the sound and flash to the source, spot the trailing lure and attack it. Another excellent attractor is the size 4/0 Jensen Trout & Kokanee Dodger which was specifically designed for kokanee trolling and provides fish-attracting flash without unwanted drag.

Note: These fish have very delicate and tender mouths, much like crappie. Care must be taken in making sure the shock of the initial strike is absorbed by using a rubber snubber or a rod having a sensitive tip. Make sure kokanes are played carefully and are landed with the aid of a net to prevent hooks from tearing out.



A troll consists of a rudder at the front end which prevents line twist, a series of free-swinging blades on a wire cable or shaft and a swivel on which to tie a leader. From the end of the troll a 4- to 8-lb. test leader should extend 18 to 48 inches back to the chosen lure.



## LEADED LINES AND FLY LINES

For fishing small lures with a fly outfit for kokanee, use 15 to 20 feet of 4-lb. test leader utilizing a nail knot to attach the leader to your line as illustrated on the next page.

Depending upon the depth you wish to reach, fly lines can be floaters, sinkers, or sink tips. The 15 and 30-ft. sink tip models lend themselves very well to trolling when kokanee are at medium depths. Deep trolling with a fly line is possible with a weighted Troll Ease and sinking line. Once you have

chosen the line based on the depth you wish to fish, knot the lure to the end of your leader, strip out 40 to 60 feet of fly line and begin the troll.

Another variation to reach kokanes in deep water without using heavy leads or large trolls is leadcore line. This is color-coded in 10-ft. sections and anglers often refer to distances in terms of how many colors they have out. For example, "three colors" which would translate into 30 feet of line, depending on the color section length of the lead core you choose, plus whatever leader length was used. Lead-core sinks at about a 45° angle on a slow troll so with 90 feet out, your lure would be about 45 feet deep. A 25-ft. section of 4- to 6-lb. test monofilament commonly is used as leader for leadcore kokanee fishing. Lead-core line does require the use of a large capacity fly reel or casting reel as it is bulky and requires a large amount of reel storage space.

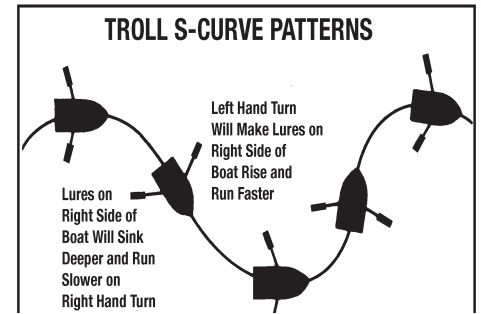
## TRICKS THAT TAKE KOKANEE

**TROLL S-L-O-W-L-Y!** One of the biggest mistakes made by anglers is working a lure too fast. Most lures will not perform correctly at fast speeds plus kokanee will generally not hit a fast-moving lure... they need to be tantalized by it. The best advice we can give you is to troll slowly, the slower the better. If using a lake troll like the Ford Fender or Beer Can, your rod tip should have a slow, regular pulsing action. Many expert trollers refuse to use a motor as they feel it's just too fast; they use oars instead. If you're going to use a motor, make sure it will throttle down to a crawl or purchase a multispeed electric motor or a 1- or 2-horse gas motor in addition to the one you use for power.

**VARY SPEED.** While slow is the password, this does not mean slow all the time. A lure running through the water at the same speed, the same depth and giving off the same vibration pattern will not catch many fish. Slowly, yes, but every few minutes speed up a bit so the lure changes its speed and vibration pattern.

## WORK IN "S" CURVES.

Trolling in a straight line between two points is the least successful path you can take. Consistent trolling results require that you do everything possible to keep from running in that straight line. An "S" pattern between



those two points will produce many more strikes and kokanee. Every time the lure or troll is on the inside of a swing of the boat, it will slow down and drop deeper in the water. Each time it is on the outside of a curve it will speed up and rise in the water. With each turn of your boat you will produce different speed and vibration patterns from the lure you are trolling. This will interest kokanee more and tempt them to strike.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

One of the easiest things you can do to improve fishing results is to sharpen dull hooks with the Luhr-Jensen's Original Hook File. If the hook is too damaged replace them with premium quality VMC Hooks.



You should always use a premium quality braided or monofilament line that has superior knot strength, small diameter in relation to pound test and is abrasion resistant.

Purchase a quality depth finder which will help in locating fish as well as prime underwater fish-holding structure which can't otherwise be detected.



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