



Pacific Northwest Region Virtual Book Club

Salmon by Mark Kurlansky

7:00 PM PT on November 18th, 2021

Zoom Meeting Details (will be the same for every meeting)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85114392408>

Meeting ID: 851 1439 2408

Password: tasaa

Meeting Schedule

Parts	Chapters	Date	# of pages
Part Three: The Problem with Solutions	Chapter Nine: Why Not Make More?	18-Nov	56
	Chapter Ten: Sea Cattle		
	Chapter Eleven: The Release		
Part Four: The Dangerous Future	Chapter Twelve: Elegy for the Atlantic	2-Dec	86

Chapter Nine: Why Not Make More?

1. On p. 216, last sentence says that hatcheries became official federal policy under President Grant. Did this blow anyone else's mind? When I think of Grant, about the only thing that comes to mind is the Civil War. (Kirk)
 - a. It also makes me think of the importance of teaching political, scientific, and other histories together. Does anyone tie these together in their class? (For example- What was going on "politically" during the major scientific advances that may have created synergistic impacts?) (Kirk)
2. I work frequently with some of the staff at the Leavenworth Nat. Fish Hatchery, which specifically raises salmon and [releases them into the Wenatchee River](#). One of them lived in Bristol Bay and she has also read Kurlansky's book. She thinks that Kurlansky used a fairly limited number of sources, with a fairly "one-sided" point of view. Do you agree, and think as she does, that the result is a fairly narrow perspective? (Kirk)
3. On p. 237, Kurlansky says the oceans don't have the carrying capacity for historic numbers of fish... he says that this is due to climate change according to a study... However, he does not provide any citations in the text or in the chapter notes. In other places he makes claims with no supporting citations. Is this a problem, or the norm, for "non-fiction" books of this type? (Kirk)

4. Checkout [the post on Nov.12 of the Yakama Nation Fisheries](#) group releasing “extra” Coho salmon from the National Fish Hatchery into the Wenatchee River. Does this alliance, and the fact that the Yakama Nation is utilizing hatcheries seem to be a strange shift, as Kurlansky suggests on p. 232? (Kirk)
5. Many of us are probably familiar with the concept of “a shifting baseline” (p. 222). Do you think these baselines are useful given the rate of environmental change? How should we ‘treat’ shifting baseline syndrome? (Methea)
6. As a side note, there's a fairly new book/biography of David Starr Jordan (p. 228) called “Why Fish Don’t Exist”. (No such thing as a salmon!?) (Methea)

Chapter Ten: Sea Cattle

1. On p. 240, Kurlansky said hatcheries were built “on the belief that industry can outsmart nature”. Is trying to solve a problem (in this case declining salmon populations) the same as trying to “outsmart nature”? (Kirk)
2. For our biologists in the group—on p. 248 Kurlansky said that Atlantic salmon will not mate with Pacific salmon. Obviously, they don’t actually mate, but if they would be in the same location will one not fertilize the other? If cross fertilization would occur would an embryo develop? Be viable? (Kirk)
3. Thinking back to the premise of the book... “If salmon do not survive there is little hope for the planet.” Does anyone else get the idea that he doesn’t think there is any solution? (Kirk)
4. Kurlansky seems to be against agriculture, wild harvest, against fish farming, is anyone else waiting for him to present some solutions? (Kirk)

Chapter Eleven: The Release

1. Anyone else feel like a fly on the end of a line being swung back and forth in the rambling monologue of this chapter? And then left wondering why he spent an entire chapter beating up fly fishing? (Kirk)
2. Why not take aim at rod and reel (vs. fly fishing) in this chapter? (Methea)
3. If an organization like Trout Unlimited were to write a follow-up to this chapter what do think their critique might include? (Methea)
4. Did this chapter alter your thoughts/perceptions regarding ‘catch and release’? (Methea)

Additional thoughts from Kirk:

I thought this was interesting based on previous discussion about Native Americans taking care of the fish populations. I am currently reading a newly released book by Rod Molzahn, What They Found: Stories of People in North Central Washington. He describes the rituals at Kettle Falls on the upper Columbia in 1811 During the first days of the salmon run only a single spearman was allowed to fish. Only after the chief determined that enough salmon had passed did fishing begin for everyone else.

In the valley where Leavenworth is now located, over 1000 P’squose people would gather to fish, and they would build a barricade (of pine logs and willow mats) across the entire Wenatchee River. This forced the fish to the sides of the river where they could be speared. Baskets were placed upstream of the barricade to catch any fish that would jump over. They would also build traps and spear fish in Tumwater Canyon.