



KWIKFISH FOR CHINOOK **TECH SHEET**

Techniques for Catching Chinook Salmon Using Kwikfish

From The Logs of the Luhr-Jensen Field Research Team

What started over 30 years ago as a local favorite, wrapping a sardine fillet to the belly of large size **Kwikfish**®, is now the most widely used chinook lure on the West Coast. Kwikfish lures feature high action at all trolling speeds, while their body shape, weight, and lip design make them dive when pulled through the water. Kwikfish can be plunked, trolled or backtrolled with or without weight or in combination with a **Jet Diver**™. This bulletin focuses on the proper use of this high-action plug, how to correctly add a sardine fillet, plus some rigging tips that will help you catch more fish.

BACKTROLLING

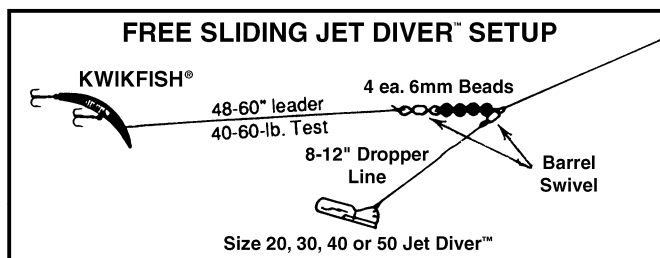
With your boat headed upstream above the area you wish to fish, row or run your motor just fast enough to hold your craft even with the current. While holding your boat steady (as if you were anchored), let your diving plug out behind the boat. When you stop letting out line, the current will cause the lure to dive and wiggle. Backtrolling is the process of allowing your boat and trailing lure to slowly slip downstream while resisting the current enough to cause the lure to dive. Knowing that salmon will primarily be found near the bottom, water depth will determine whether you "flatline" your Kwikfish (without a diver or additional weight), or incorporate a Jet Diver or lead ball as discussed below.

FLATLINING

The K14, K15 and K16 sized Kwikfish will dive from 8- to 12-feet when trolled or backtrolled on a flat line (without additional weight). The exact diving depth achieved will depend on current speed, line diameter, and the amount of line out. For example, slow current or a short trolling distance (30 feet) will produce a shallow dive, while a strong current or greater trolling distance (80 feet) will produce a deep dive. The K11X, K13X and K16X Kwikfish will dive deeper than the standard models, with a diving range of 8- to 18-feet.

USING A JET DIVER

You can make your Kwikfish dive extra deep by adding a Jet Diver. This device can be used instead of a sinker when trolling, backtrolling, or plunking a salmon-sized Kwikfish. Although the Jet Diver is available in a size 10 (popular for trout and steelhead), the sizes preferred by salmon anglers include the 20, 30, 40, and 50. The number designation denotes the maximum diving depth of each respective size. However, this can vary greatly depending on line diameter, distance out, and current speed. Rigged in a free-sliding fashion, the Jet Diver does not interfere with lure action, or a hooked fish's ability to run.



BACK-BOUNCING KWIKFISH

Back-bouncing with a weight attached to a dropper line is the most productive way to fish Kwikfish in deep salmon holes that lack the proper current to take your lure near bottom on its own. This technique is much like back-bouncing bait, but with one important difference; hold your rod steady when your lure is in position. The amount of weight you use is critical. Too much and your lure won't bounce out in the current from your boat; not enough and you may not feel the weight hit bottom, or you may not be sure where the bottom is in relationship to your Kwikfish. Dropper lines for weight, like a Jet Diver, should be rigged free-sliding as shown above.

Once you've selected the right size sinker, you'll need to back-bounce or walk your outfit downstream from your boat until your line is at a 45-degree angle. Given the right size weight, the pull of your Kwikfish working in the current should hold your weight 6- to 12-inches above the bottom. Now, hold your rod steady while backtrolling your boat through areas likely to hold fish. Since the depth can change, you will need to check for bottom regularly, and either play out or pick up line to maintain a position just off the bottom.



BAITWRAPPER

The best way to make your salmon-size (K14, K15, K16, or 16X) Kwikfish even more deadly is to add a scent-dispersing fillet of sardine to its belly. It's just a fact that you'll get more strikes and better hookups if you keep a bait fillet wrapped to your Kwikfish.

Although you can use herring, anchovy, smelt or sardine as your bait wrapper, sardine is the most popular and is readily available in tackle stores. Start by filleting the sides off your baitfish and cutting them into rectangular pieces 7/8" x 1-1/2" for the K14 size, 1" x 1-3/4" for the K15 and 1-1/8" x 2 -1/2" for the K16 and 16X. A pair of scissors works great for cutting your fillets to size and notching them so they fit around the belly eyelet. Your bait fillet doesn't have to be exact (about a third of the length of your lure), but you'll find the above measurements handy when starting out.

When wrapping a bait fillet to the underside of your Kwikfish, you should center it around the belly eyelet (which is the balance point of the lure), with the skin next to the lure body. You can use 2-pound test mono or **Kwikfish**® *Stretchy Thread*™ (elastic thread) as a wrapping material. By making 20 to 30 wraps, your fillet will conform to the shape of the lure body and not dampen the plug's action. You should secure your wrap with two or three half-hitch knots. For best results, your fillet should be changed often - at least every hour. **TIP:** Wrap several lures the night before or (better yet) the morning of your trip and keep them fresh in a small bait cooler.

WAIT BEFORE "SETTING THE HOOK"

The strike of a salmon taking a large Kwikfish will likely be the hardest you'll ever feel, however, don't set the hook until the fish has pulled your rod tip down at least three times. Waiting on the bite will increase your chance of a solid hook up, while yanking too soon can result in a clean miss or poor hook-up that may result in a lost fish. If you're using a baitcasting reel, make sure your thumb is firmly planted on the reel spool when you do finally set the hook. The only places where Kwikfish anglers don't wait to set the hook are the salmon rivers located in Northern California.

ROD, REEL, AND LINE

Salmon rods with soft tip sections and powerful butt sections are preferred for fishing Kwikfish. Light tips allow maximum lure action while a powerful butt section assists in setting the hook and controlling large fish. Reels require stout drag systems and should be loaded with 50- to 80-pound braided mainlines like Rapala® Titanium® Braid or 20- to 30-pound monofilament. Don't be shy about using powerful leaders in 40-pound test or stronger as the extra strength does not deter strikes and assures more fish are landed. Generally speaking, lighter lines and leaders can be used when fishing the K10, K12, K11X and K13X size Kwikfish or when chasing steelhead or spring chinook, but for larger fall chinook, a powerful rod, reel, line and leader combination is encouraged.

TUNING

As with all diving plugs, your Kwikfish may require tuning to achieve the best possible action. Check the action by pulling it through the water. It should yield an even side-to-side wobbling motion. However, if it dives to the left, turn the line-attachment screw eye slightly to the right (clockwise). If it dives to the right, turn the eyelet to the left (counterclockwise). Make small corrections to the lure, checking the action after each adjustment. A lopsided sardine fillet can throw your Kwikfish out of tune. You can rewrap a crooked fillet or try tuning your bait wrapper by flattening any lopsidedness with your thumb. For tuning plugs, as well as changing hooks when necessary, a pair of pliers with a split ring tool, like Rapala's Carbide Pro® Pliers, will prove invaluable.

NOTE: All standard Kwikfish are rigged with screw eyes, while the K11X, K13X and K16X sizes are equipped with fixed eyelets. These new "X-treme" models should not require tuning. However, and only if need be, they can be tuned by bending (not turning) the line-attachment eyelet.

KWIKFISH SIZES FOR SALMON

The most popular salmon sizes in the standard model Kwikfish are the K14, K15 and K16. In recent years, Luhr-Jensen has added the Kwikfish "X-treme" models (K11X, K13X and K16X). These models have more extreme action, do not require tuning, and will dive deeper than the standard models. The blinking LED lighted versions of the "X" series (K13X and K16X) are equipped with a water-activated blinking strobe, which will outperform unlit models during low light, darkness, or in turbid water.



K13 Size Kwikfish

"HOT TAIL" FINISHES

Our "Tail" or "Hot Tail" finishes, where the accent color is painted on the tail of the lure, have become our best sellers. The popularity of the "Hot Tail" finishes are supported by years of fishing research that clearly show salmon zeroing in on the colored end of the lure, which, with "Hot Tail" finishes is where the trailing hook is located. It's proved so effective that many anglers now remove the belly hook from Kwikfish having "Hot Tail" paint patterns. Removing the belly hook makes adding your bait wrapper easier and quickens the release of wild fish.

PLUNKING KWIKFISH

Besides trolling, plunking Kwikfish from an anchored boat is growing in popularity. Your outfit can be rigged like the diagram below, except that the dropper line for your weight should be longer, usually 18 to 36 inches. Plunking can be particularly effective for fall chinook in the upper ends of bays or tidal areas when there is sufficient current to work stationary lures. Try plunking for spring, summer or fall chinook as they migrate upstream, especially where bottom contours funnel fish into a narrow traveling zone. When water conditions are clear, try dropping down to a K10, K12, K11X or K13X size Kwikfish, and although these small sizes won't carry a sardine fillet, you can apply your favorite scent to them.

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Kwikfish are available in 13 standard and three "X-treme" models ranging in length from 1-5/16 inches for trout up to 5-9/16 inches for salmon. In addition, four jointed models including the K8J, K10J, K12J and K18J are specifically designed for lake trout trolling.

This is one of a series of more than 25 detailed reports produced by Luhr-Jensen. For the complete series of Tech Reports, Tech Sheets and Tech Bulletins, visit the Luhr-Jensen website at www.luhrjensen.com.

