



## Kitselas Lands and Resources Department

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### Post Season Oolichan Summary

The Lands and Resources Department (KLRD) has collected information from a number of sources and would like to update the community on the 2021 Skeena River Oolichan fishery. In short, the Oolichan run did not shape up to what was expected. Although there were lots of birds and sea lions spotted in river, fishers had a difficult time dip netting Oolichan on the highway side of the river. Below is a summary of information from 1) community members who were fishing; 2) KLRD's ongoing monitoring programs, and; 3) preliminary reports from North Coast Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society:

- Over the past 5 years, the average start of the Skeena Oolichan run has been around the 3rd-4<sup>th</sup> week of February. Although the river was ice free during this time, Oolichan were not being caught until well after March 1 suggesting that the 2021 run was later than the 5 year average;
- Dip netting from the highway side of the river was not successful during daylight hours. Many fishers reported that dip netting was more successful at night. Oolichan typically occupy different depths of the river from daytime (deeper) to nighttime (near surface), some speculating that this is most likely a response to predation;
- Fishers reported that they had to spend much more time on the river this year to get any kind of catch – it was much harder than in past years;
- Setting nets was a more successful way to acquire fish during the daytime;
- Reports of bird and sea lion predation was observed on the far side of the Skeena suggesting that Oolichan were migrating up different channels away from the shore.

Although final estimates have not been provided from the NCSFNSS test fishery, the preliminary understanding is that this year's Oolichan run was much smaller than the previous 5 years. Once these numbers are available, KLRD will update the community.

It should be noted that the Skeena River Oolichan run was classified as "threatened" in 2011 by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada). It is estimated that the run in 2011 was 10% of what it was in the 1800's.

As early as 2008 it was thought that there was a complete failure of the Skeena River Oolichan population. Although the Oolichan run has undergone some recovery in recent years, the species remains threatened and populations require annual monitoring to inform conservation and management measures. Kitselas Lands and Resources will continue to oversee these activities and annually update the community on the status of the species.

Please note: Kitselas First Nation is a member Nation of the North Coast Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society. We work collaboratively on a number of stewardship programs in the Territory.