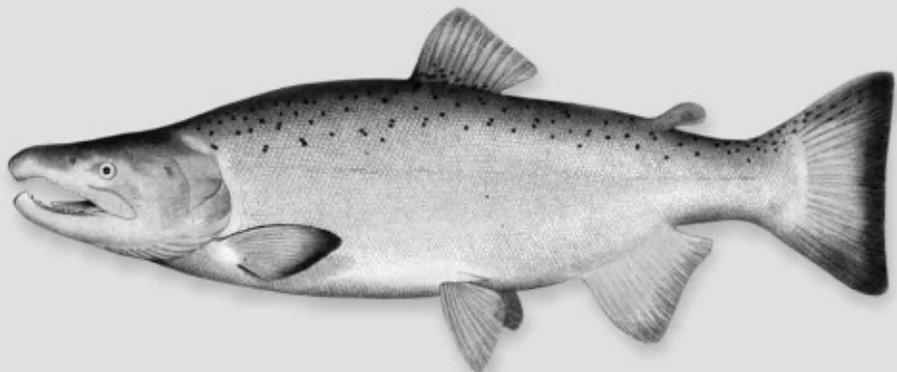
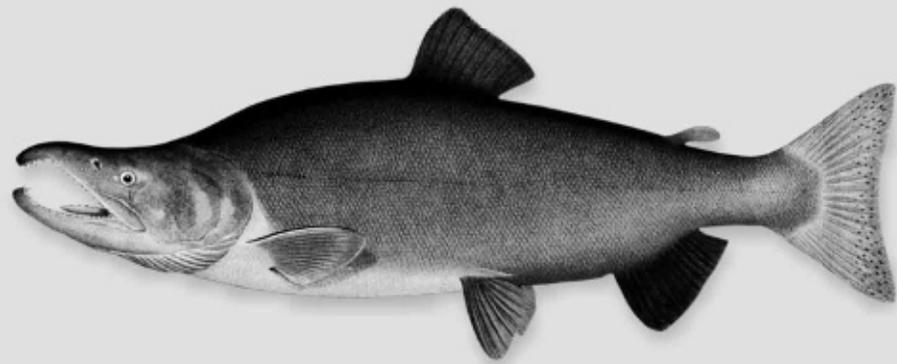
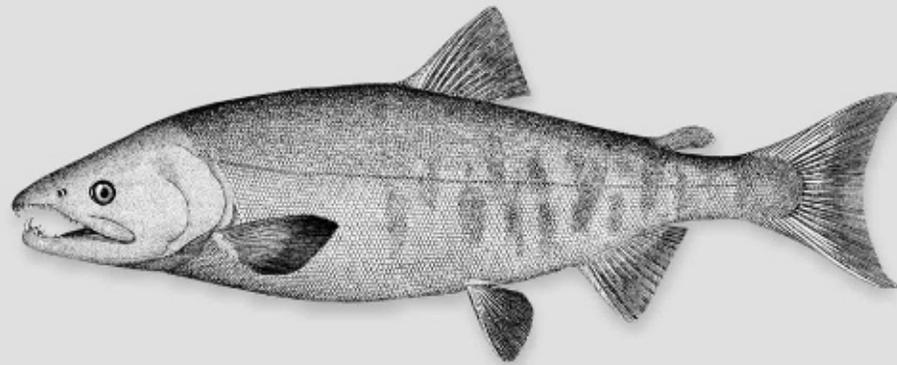


Fish Report No. 2:

Duke Rothwell—King Crab—Thompson Fish Co.—*Bull Moose*



Duke Rothwell

In 1962, Norman “Duke” Rothwell traveled the Inside Passage to Alaska from his home in Blaine, Washington on the *Pride*, a small vessel rigged to fish Dungeness crab. Dungeness crab were then on a down cycle in Washington, Oregon, and California, but populations in Alaska were healthy and there was a ready market in the Lower 48 for all that could be produced.²⁶⁰ Participation in Southeast Alaska’s Dungeness crab fishery was so low at that time that there was minimal need for formal regulations and other restrictions. The season was year round and there was no limit on the number of pots an individual could legally fish.^{LL 261}

Whether by design or simply because Glacier Bay was near the end of his exploration of the crab fishing grounds along the Inside Passage, Rothwell fished the lower waters of Glacier Bay for about two months that fall. The following season he returned and fished for about three months in Dundas Bay.²⁶² Pelican Cold Storage was operating a crab cannery at Hoonah, which provided a convenient market.

In 1964, Rothwell upgraded to the 40-foot *Adeline*, a Washington-built troller that he converted to fish Dungeness crab (see Figure 19). He leased the *Pride* to another fisherman, who worked together with him in Southeast Alaska at least until 1969.^{MM 263} The *Adeline* would become a fixture in the Glacier Bay area for nearly four decades, and Rothwell would become probably the region’s most successful Dungeness crab fisherman. Each year, usually from mid-spring through mid-fall, he fished from Point Couverden to Dundas Bay, and he routinely caught some 200,000 to 350,000 pounds of crab.²⁶⁴ His best year was said to have been a million pounds, but this may have included crab caught by the *Pride*, in which he retained an interest, and possibly another vessel, the *Julia*, which fished the outer coast waters around Icy Point.^{NN 265} Rothwell often boasted during the 1970s that he “owned” Icy Strait.

Chuck Janda, who was a ranger at Glacier Bay from April 1964 until January 1978, remembered Rothwell as a “likeable char-



Figure 19: Duke Rothwell aboard the *Adeline* at Pelican Cold Storage with full load of crab. Rothwell was among the most skilled and successful fishermen who fished in Glacier Bay. (courtesy Stewart Ely)

acter, always a smile and a wave when we passed.”²⁶⁶ Greg Streveler, NPS biologist at Glacier Bay, recorded only one vessel fishing Dungeness crab in Glacier Bay in the years 1969 and 1970. The “sustained effort” through those summers was Rothwell’s.²⁶⁷ Rothwell also supplied Glacier Bay Lodge with Dungeness crab.²⁶⁸

A chain-smoker who alternated between Camels and Salems, Rothwell was extremely savvy and efficient. He was also very secretive: his marker buoys were painted a drab color and he used sinking buoy line. This made his gear difficult to see from the water and almost impossible to see from the air. Another of his tricks was to shorten buoy lines so the buoys were underwater except at low tide. The *Adeline* itself was painted “creekrobber” grey, a color favored by salmon fishermen who tried to remain undetected while fishing in closed areas. Rothwell was even known to travel at night without running lights to keep others from knowing where he fished. Many thought Rothwell’s success at catching crab was due to his fishing more pots than the

^{LL} In 1963 the pot limit was established at 300. The first seasonal closures were introduced in the late 1960s.

^{MM} In 1964 Chief Ranger David Butts complained of Dungeness crab buoys in Bartlett Cove being so numerous that they were a hazard to boat and float plane traffic. Two vessels, one of which was the *Adeline*, had set more than fifty pots between the NPS dock and the head of Bartlett Cove. Butts proposed that the NPS adapt a special regulation that would prohibit all commercial fishing inside of a line drawn from the NPS dock true northwest to Lester Island.

^{NN} A catch of a million pounds of crab over a period of, say, 39 weeks using 300 pots requires the average catch per pot per week to be about 85.5 pounds, or about 33 crab, based on an average crab weight of 2.6 pounds.

300 that regulations allowed. Even some of his deckhands thought this was the case, but no one seemed to know for sure.²⁶⁹ ADF&G enforcement agent Clint Converse spent considerable time trying to prove Rothwell was running too much gear, but it seems he was never able to do so. Rothwell considered keeping ahead of Converse's efforts to be all good sport.²⁷⁰

For a number of years, Rothwell had a gentleman's agreement with Pelican Cold Storage to supply all the Dungeness crab needed by the Hoonah cannery. In exchange, the cannery agreed to not purchase crab from other vessels. According to Rothwell, there were only so many Dungeness crab in the area, and if another vessel was involved, fishing wouldn't be worth his time and he would leave.²⁷¹ Twice a week the *Adeline* delivered 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of crab to the Hoonah cannery.

About the same time Rothwell began fishing, the crab cannery at Hoonah began brine freezing whole "jumbo" crab, and about five years later it began producing gallon cans of frozen crab meat for the restaurant trade.²⁷² In 1974-1975, the plant was shut down and operations moved to Pelican.²⁷³

"Nobody saved me no buffalo" was Rothwell's favorite response to questions about catching so many crab. Rothwell's actual stewardship of the Dungeness crab resource was based on his own financial interests. Since he had little competition, he could afford to let the grounds he had been fishing "rest" for several years so the size and the quality of crab would increase. Rothwell sometimes said he was "farming" Dungeness crab.²⁷⁴ His general routine was arguably beneficial for the health of the resource as well as for Duke Rothwell. Some aspects of Rothwell's crab fishing venture, however, were of questionable value. After he noticed that the largest female Dungeness crab in the area were at Idaho Inlet, he transplanted some in Dundas Bay, hoping there was a genetic factor at play that would increase the average size of male crab there.²⁷⁵ He also transplanted crab from Dundas Bay to near Young Island, in Glacier Bay's Beardslee Islands.²⁷⁶ Rothwell's crab fishing venture was clearly not healthy for the immature king crab that on one occasion filled a number of his Dungeness pots in the Beardslees. The king crab were competing with the Dungeness, and Rothwell told Pete Lesh, one of his deckhands, to "break those crab." Lesh refused, saying

someday somebody would be catching the crab. "Nobody saved me no buffalo" was Rothwell's reply. He then had his other deckhand kill the crab.²⁷⁷

In about 1970, Superintendent Bob Howe seemed to think Dungeness crab fishing in the Beardslee Islands had little future. He took the Sierra Club's Jack Hession on a tour of the islands, where he explained that the crab gear they were seeing belonged to an "old fellow" (Rothwell), whose retirement would end crab fishing in the Beardslees.²⁷⁸ Rothwell retired in 1984, but crab fishing did anything but end. He sold the *Adeline* and his crab gear to Otto and Christina Florschutz, who, in combination with a number of other fishermen, fished the Beardslees far more intensively than Rothwell ever had.

King Crab

The king crab industry began developing in Alaska shortly after World War II, with the effort concentrated in the Bering Sea. In 1964, fishermen statewide delivered nearly 90 million pounds.²⁷⁹

King crab are not true crab, but "anomurans." They differ outwardly from true crab in that they appear to have four pairs of legs (including the front claw-carrying ones), rather than five, as in true crab. The fifth pair of legs is very small and often tucked away beneath the carapace. The vast majority of king crab caught in Glacier Bay are red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschatica*). Also of interest in Glacier Bay, however, is the blue king crab (*Paralithodes platypus*). Although the species's range extends from Southeast Alaska to Japan, Glacier Bay proper is one of only three small areas in Southeast Alaska where it has been targeted by fishermen.²⁸⁰ A large blue king crab can weigh about twenty pounds and be nearly four feet across. Golden king crab (*Lithodes aequispina*) are also caught in Glacier Bay.

King crab are caught in large rectangular nylon web-covered steel-framed pots that can weigh 600 pounds or more. As with Dungeness pots, one-way tunnels allow the crabs entry but not egress. King crab pots are usually baited with herring. In Southeast Alaska, seine boats, which are generally 58 feet long (the legal limit), are often used to fish king crab.

In what may have been the first effort to catch king crab in Glacier Bay, the vessel *Rio de Oro* fished for approximately nine months in 1962.²⁸¹ The following year, however, there was

no effort.²⁸² In 1965 only one vessel fished king crab in Glacier Bay “with any frequency.”²⁸³ Greg Streveler, who became a ranger at Glacier Bay N.M. in 1967, recalled that the vessels *Baranof Queen* and *Wyoming* fished king crab in Glacier Bay during the late 1960s. The *Wyoming* continued to fish beyond the 1960s, and the vessel’s captain, Ivar Isaacson, reported a noticeable population decline around 1970.²⁸⁴ Streveler reported that two vessels fished king and Tanner crab in lower Glacier Bay during the winters of 1969-1970 and 1970-1971.²⁸⁵ The effort, at least during the first winter, was not intense: Superintendent Bob Howe reported very little king crab fishing in Glacier Bay in 1970.²⁸⁶ In about 1976 the vessel *Eagle*, a cannery tender during the salmon season, fished king crab in Glacier Bay. On at least one occasion, maintenance personnel at Glacier Bay helped make repairs on the *Eagle* and were given a few king crab in return for their effort.²⁸⁷ Ranger Russ Cahill recalled that the wives of NPS staff sometimes traded fresh-baked bread for king crab. Another source of king crab for the staff was right at Bartlett Cove, where the NPS vessel *Nunatak* was sometimes used to set and retrieve a “personal use” king crab pot. The crab were cooked using the NPS maintenance shop’s steam cleaner.

While most commercial fisheries in Glacier Bay proper grew over time, it seems the king crab fishery actually got smaller. There simply were not enough king crab in Glacier Bay to support a sustained effort.

Thompson Fish Co.

The Thompson Fish Co., which evolved into the present-day Hoonah Cold Storage, a major processor of halibut and Tanner crab from Glacier Bay, was established in Hoonah by Mike Thompson. Thompson was not originally a fish processor, but a fish buyer who bought fish under contract with various processing plants. He operated troll salmon buying scows at Deer Harbor and Hoktaheen, on the outer coast of Yakobi Island, which he serviced with his tender, *Tualitin*. He also had a buying scow that he tied to the dock at Hoonah. In about 1962, Thompson opened the Thompson Fish Co. in a small warehouse that had been previously used by the mail boat that served Hoonah. The warehouse was built over the water, and located on the site of the present-day Hoonah Cold Storage. Thompson’s operation was initially a “shoe-string” fresh fish opera-

tion. Fresh troll-caught salmon as well as some incidentally-caught halibut were shipped by air to markets in the Lower 48.²⁸⁸ The fish were transported from Hoonah to Juneau in amphibious planes, where they were transferred to scheduled planes that took them to Seattle. By 1970 the Thompson Fish Co. had the capability to freeze limited quantities of fish.²⁸⁹ Ice was initially not provided to fishermen, but was used only to cool purchased fish.²⁹⁰ During the 1970s, Mike Thompson moved his operation to a larger building and increased its freezing capacity to about 35,000 pounds per day. By the mid-1970s, Thompson was able to provide ice to fishermen.

Bull Moose

On July 20, 1969 the approximately 52-foot Seattle-based wooden-hulled salmon seiner *Bull Moose* (built in 1913) was enroute from Hoonah to Glacier Bay Lodge for an evening of recreation for the crew during a closed period in the salmon season. With its seine and heavy seine skiff on deck and nothing in its hold, the *Bull Moose* was top-heavy. Near Ancon Rock, at the southeast entrance to Glacier Bay, the vessel suddenly capsized and sank, perhaps because the seine skiff had shifted to one side. The Ancon Rock area is known for its tide rips. Two crewmembers were trapped below deck and perished. The captain and three crewmembers survived by clinging to the seine’s corkline for about half an hour before being rescued by Glacier Bay Lodge concessioner Frank Kearns, who happened to spot them while out for an afternoon of fishing. The bodies of the dead crewmembers were recovered after the vessel was brought to the surface by the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Sweetbriar*. The *Bull Moose* was then towed to a nearby beach for salvage operations, after which it was abandoned.²⁹¹

