

Year End Report- 2019



Brittany Key, Manager

Preetinder Dhillon, Supervisor

Abigail Cuenza, Supervisor

Staff

The positions of manager and supervisors were filled in late March and started May 15th. All attendants were hired in mid-June and started on June 25th. The supervisors were trained in early June instead of closer to their start date due to low water levels, and all the attendants were trained the day they started.

Both supervisors did well this summer. This was Abigail Cuenza's first year at the ladder. She had a steep learning curve by starting in a supervisor position with no prior experience at the ladder but, she has been great with the job. She loves to meet new people, give tours and handle the salmon. She has been a good leader for whenever needed. Preet Dhillon is the other supervisor. This was Preet's 3rd year at the ladder, but she worked as an attendant the previous 2 years. Preet Dhillon took over as supervisor on July 2nd after problems with the supervisor initially hired. It is always nice to have Preet by my side, as she and I started together 2 years ago. She is a great role model and knows how the ladder operates. She is a great leader for the attendants and knows the information very well. Both Abigail and Preet's last day was on August 25th.

We hired Derek Hennings, Emily Scott, Kimberly Bedard, Eleanor Macmillan, and Ross McBee as attendants. Derek Hennings was highly recommended by the hatchery staff. He has shown his passion for the fish, is wonderful at giving tours and a pleasure to work with. This was Derek's first year at the ladder, and his last day was August 28th. This was also Emily Scott's first year at the ladder, and she enjoyed learning about the fish and talking to people. She always had a smile on her face and loved meeting new people. Her last day was August 12th. Kimberly Bedard has a strong understanding of fish and wanted to expand on what she learned in school and grow her understanding. She has been very knowledgeable and great with answering any questions a tourist might have. She has also had lots of suggestions that made the ladder look even better. Kimberly's last day was August 29th. Eleanor Macmillan was hired in the late summer and started August 6th. This is also her first year here. She has been a good fit. She enjoys watching the salmon come in and is a good team player. She is also very helpful. She helped the manager clean up the last few things in the building in September. Since we were short staffed for July and some shifts in August, we had Ross McBee fill in. This is his 5th year here, and this year he worked as a part time attendant. He has been very helpful with the schedule and knows lots about the ladder and salmon, so he was a great fit.

Preet, Derek, Kim and Eleanor all spoke French, which was extremely helpful. We had lots of German tourists this year. We usually just show them the German brochure, or they would have a tour guide from an individual tour company.

Julia Broeren, our First Nations elder, started her visits on June 12th. She would come to visit every Wednesday from 1:00-3:00 pm. She would usually bring Bannock or make soapberry ice-cream.



Hours

We first opened the facility on June 10th. The building needed to be repainted and the sorting cage near the back gate needed to be fixed, so we opened to the public a little bit later. Attendants started June 25th. On June 28th, we extended our operating hours to 10 hours a day, from 9:00am to 7:00pm daily. We were closed July 1st for Canada day, which was appreciated by all the staff. On July 24th, we further extended our operating hours to 12 hours a day from 9:00am-9:00pm. The staff worked in two shifts, an AM shift (8:30am to 5:30 pm) and a PM shift (12:30pm to 9:30pm). We extend our hours to 12 hours daily because of the increased number of salmon coming through the ladder, and to ensure salmon don't have to stay in the ladder for too long. We closed for 1 hour on Saturday, August 24th, to accommodate the fry release of Kokanee, Rainbow Trout and Chinook salmon fry. On August 27th, we switched our hours back to 8:30-5:30 as the salmon run was slowing down. The last day open to the public was August 30th. We had to call the Visitor Centre every time we changed our hours, even after they were posted on Facebook. We've also had to remind the Visitor Centre that there are no salmon in June, as they would tell the tourists that there would be salmon in the ladder.

Wildlife

We had 1 encounter with a porcupine in late June. The CO'S were called, and they moved it across the road. However, it ran back by the shed under the fence. Since then, it has not been seen. We have 2 local foxes that use the boardwalk to go to and from their den. This season we have had a total of 15 dead fish float through the ladder which have been caught by the front gate. The 15 dead fish were a combination of Arctic Grayling and Long Nose suckers. On August 6th, 2 of the staff members were cleaning the cage and they noticed there was a dead ground squirrel stuck on the gate. We also had a dead mouse on the front of the gate. We

took the squirrel down river and put it in the water. Typically, we put dead fish into the lower ladder, but they then float past the live camera.

Appreciation Night

Our 2019 Appreciation Night was held on August 12th from 5:00-8:00. We had over 300 people attend. Yukon Energy, YFGA and the Fish Ladder Facebook pages all made a post regarding the event. We also hung many posters around town in places such as the S.S. Klondike, TD bank, Main Street and more. We had donations from Takhini Hot Springs, Yukon Beverages, Yukon Built, Yukon Fish and Game Association, Yukon Energy, Murdoch's, Coast Mountain Sports and Alexco. Stephanie Cunha, Communications Manager of Yukon Energy organized the cake and food trays. She bought 2 cakes, 3 vegetables trays, 4 fruit trays, and 3 large cheese and meat trays. This was a good amount of food for how many guests we had. We had no leftovers. For beverages, the Fish Ladder staff made iced tea and we had just enough for everyone as well. My only recommendation is to have more paper plates, we had about 400 plates and we went through them all. Appreciation Night was planned very well this year. We had a successful salmon sort of 5 salmon, and we had 2 children's activities (fishing for little magnetic fish and finger painting). Our First Nations Elder, Julia, made soapberry ice cream as well. We had a kid's draw and an adult draw during the night. Having a planned chart that detailed what was scheduled for each hour was very helpful. We also scheduled station switches for the staff every 30 minutes. It was also very helpful to have two people at all times handing out tickets, as it got very busy at the front door. Emily's mom offered to take photos of appreciation night for us, which was a huge help. Another suggestion is to have someone watching the drink stands and food tables. Brittany was told that people were using it to fill up their water bottles, which was not the purpose of the drink stands.



After we cleaned up, which took an hour, all staff members went to Boston Pizza. Yukon Fish and Game Association paid for the dinner. In addition to the Fish Ladder staff, Gord Zealand, Lawrence Vano and Stephanie Cunha attended the dinner.

Fish Aquariums

This year, we changed the water in the aquariums every two weeks, as in previous years. Every month, we do one filter change with hatchery water. I would recommend getting more active charcoal from Duffy's Pet Store. The largest container offered would be best. Although expensive, it is the best price for how much you get. This year, fry overload was an issue for the Rainbow Trout, as we had 10 casualties. We now have a happy 5 Rainbow trout that mind their space. There should be a maximum of 8 Rainbow Trout in the tank. The Kokanee have been healthy and thriving. They are a schooling fish, so they enjoy being in numbers. On August 16th, Eleanor and the manager noticed one of the Chinook salmon fry had a small white dot on its eye. This is a sign of a damaged eye lens and was possibly caused by clipping in the hatchery. This is called an Eye Fluke and is relatively common among freshwater and anadromous fish. We released the fish on Saturday, August 24th. The chinook fry went to Wolf Creek while the Rainbow Trout and the Kokanee were taken to Long Lake. The cleanup process takes a long time, especially cleaning the tanks, the filters and removing all the water.

Safety

Every person working on or near the ladder must go through extensive water training. All staff members were trained when they were hired. The taggers were also trained in case a staff member was not available to go on the ladder with them. There is a safety meeting every day with the staff members working that day, and every staff must sign saying they understand the safety procedures. Lawrence also has his own safety meetings that he does with the staff before they go up to do a salmon sort. I have attached a plan for responding to someone falling in the caged area or water within the ladder to the back of the office door. This year, we had an incident of people stealing from the donation box. Since then, the donation box has been repaired. I would suggest cameras in and around the building. We have a sign saying "Smile, you're on camera" and this has helped a lot. First Aid was used on two occasions. The manager treated both incidents and they were both minor. The first incident was on August 6th. Preetinder had a tagging gun in her life jacket and it did not have a cover on it. as she put her arm beside her, the tagging gun went into her arm. She was cleaned up, bandaged and was checked on every few hours. The next incident was on August 21st. Ross was tagging a fish and the male closed its mouth with Ross' thumb in its mouth. He had minor cuts and so was treated and bandaged up.

On July 24th, the "T" bar fell into the ladder. The "T" bar is what we use to open and close the back gate to let in the salmon. The cage door was being closed and the bar detached from the chain holding it and fell into the ladder. The bar quickly submerged and sat with one side of the "T" in the back gate. Shortly thereafter, the "T" bar got sucked into the gate and disappeared. Yukon Energy, Lawrence and Warren were all called. They showed up and Darrell Johnson also brought a few welders. The next morning a new one was made. The old "T" bar

was not recovered. It will probably be able to be recovered when the water is taken out of the ladder.

Incidents #1:

On July 13th, money was stolen from the donations box outside the front door. Three individuals used double sided tape on a stick to get money out of the box. They did take some money, including bills, but the amount is unknown. A police report was filed. We then noticed they had tampered with the lock which resulted in the lock breaking. We covered the clear area so the public could not see the inside of the box. However, by that time, the lock had been broken. We then only had one donation box (inside the building) and that seemed to limit donations. The donation box and platform were removed August 15th to be redesigned.

Incidents #2:

On Friday August 16th at 8:35pm, a woman who was under the influence came to the door. She asked if the staff were capable of taking care of themselves and how many people were working. At the time, Preet and Ross were working. She then proceeded to tell Preet that there were two people who were not breathing nearby. Preet did not feel safe investigating and told the woman she would call for an ambulance and a police car. She lady replied with, "Do whatever the hell you want" and walked away in the rain. She never came into the building, and only stood in front of the front door. There were 2 trucks circling the area for 10 minutes until the police showed up. The lady was still walking around. An ambulance and police car arrived and talked to the lady. The police officer took the lady with him, but did not hand cuff her. That night Ross drove Preet home. Since that evening, nothing has happened.

Fresh water fish

Staff were asked to note every fish seen through the viewing windows daily and kept track of the fish observed on a tally sheet in the gift shop. Some fish came back daily.

| Arctic Grayling | Long nose suckers | White Fish | Lake Trout | Rainbow trout | Hatchery/wild chinook fry | Slimy sculpin | Northern Pike | Other |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------|
| 819 | 53 | 51. Round+ Broad | 14 | 21 | 2 hatchery Fry & 107 wild. 2 wild smolts. | 2 | 0 | 1 leech |

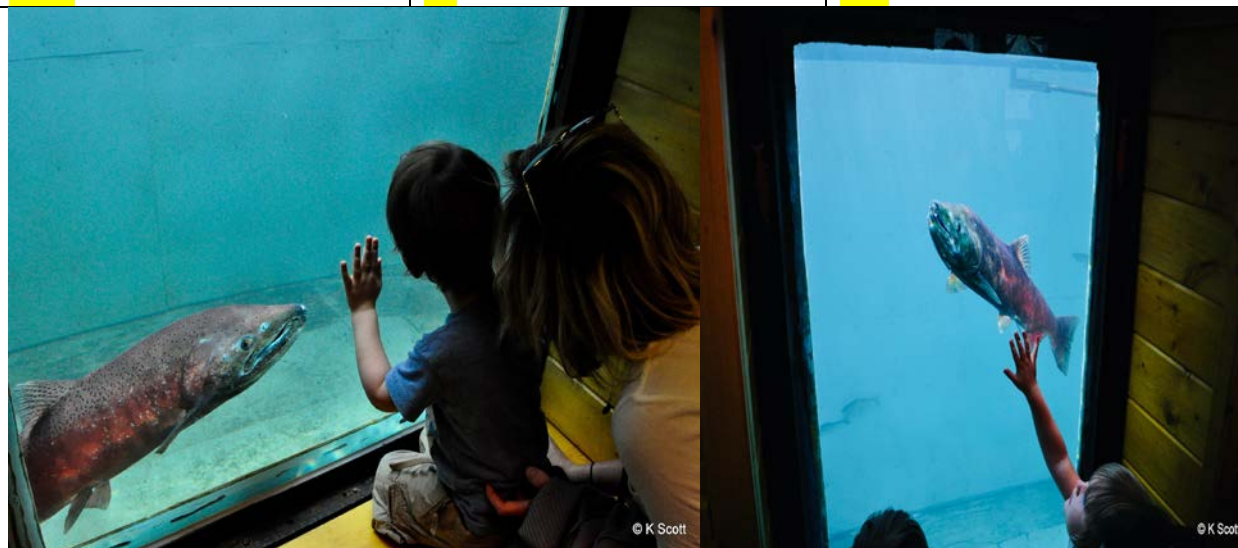
Visitors total

This year there was a total of 15,909 visitors, which is a slight decrease from last year's 17,176. There was a total of 2,384 tourists that were part of group tours. This is much higher than last year's number of 1,637 people in group tours. We had no Holland America tours this year, which was unusual. Our most popular group tours were through Ruby Range, Arctic Range and Who What Where tours.

Chinook salmon

Our first chinook salmon this year arrived on July 30th at 1:00pm. It was male, wild, and had scordosis. This year, we had a total of 282 Chinook salmon come through the ladder. This is the lowest it has been since the 1970's. Last year, 691 fish came through the ladder and 1,226 came through in 2017. Lawrence and Warren collected enough brood stock this year.

| | Female | Male |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Wild | 72 | 173 |
| Hatchery | 8 | 29 |
| Total | 80 | 202 |



Tagging Program

This year, students from Carleton University continued research involving the Fish Ladder. Will Twardek was the lead researcher. He decided to have acoustic tagging like previous years along with the new addition of radio tagging. Lawrence and Warren have been doing all the tagging at the Fish Ladder. Will and his team are netting Chinook salmon on the Takhini

River and the Yukon River. On August 23rd, Will and Alex from Alexco came by to measure the velocity of the ladder. Kim Bedard and Ross McBee accompanied them.



Communications

We have made 11 Facebook posts. Many people call the Fish Ladder phone in the office to ask about our location, hours and how many salmon are in the ladder. We also get frequent phone calls from the media requesting information about the salmon run. A few news related people have stopped in to ask for interviews, either in English or French. Brittany did two CBC interviews and Preet spoke to the Daily Star.

Recommendations – The ones in **yellow** should be prioritized

- A new latch for the screen door. As well as a spring so the screen door does not slam.
- A new RBC booklet for the deposits. Only YFGA can arrange for a new booklet to be made.
- A new display chart showing the Chinook salmon run numbers to replace the one hanging on the office door. The new chart should have updated numbers from 2018 and 2019.
- A white board outside the building to show the numbers of salmon so far that season.
- Contact Darrell and Sean at Yukon Energy to discuss fixing of the roof where the middle window is. When it rains, the window leaks quite a bit.

- Replace the lower board on the second window by the seat. Water is slowly leaking into it from the ladder. The window seat and right-side wall are both leaking a lot.
- A new white board for inside the building that is larger and can erase better without leaving stains. (Maybe a chalkboard).
- Foam or padding to cover the top of the windows where you look in. Quite a few people hit their heads.
- A new “Look Down” sign by the bottom of the cage where the entrance to the ladder is. This sign is especially helpful to explain to people where to look for the salmon if no staff member is outside.
- Another gate key.
- A better and more secure place to put the T-bar. (A metal sleeve inside the cage perhaps). Ask Lawrence where he would want it. The old one was dropped in the ladder.
- A long-distance call phone.
- Access to the Wi-Fi for the manager. Right now, data must be used when making Facebook posts.
- A new phone for in the gift shop
- Clean the live camera every few weeks.
- Make sure Yukon Energy has the live camera up on their website.
- A curtain by the gift shop (where the chairs go) so people only look in one way.
- New walkie-talkies
- Charcoal for the fish tanks. See page 5
- More brochure holders