

Presentation: Talk

Title:

Underwater Photography of Salmon: Challenges of Shooting and Documenting in the Freshwater Environment and Why it's Important.

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Abstract:

The diversity of marine environments is fairly well known to scientists and the public at large. We have devoted considerable resources and employed cutting edge technology to probe the depths of the oceans and to reveal the diversity of life that exists there. However, the same cannot be said regarding the documentation of freshwater environments and the cycles of diversity that are played out on this stage. Most often the images of animals from freshwater environments are generated by anglers displaying their “trophy” catch. Of twenty seven photos generated on the first page of a typical “Google” search for Chinook Salmon photos, (12) were drawings or renderings, (8) were anglers holding fish in their hands, (5) were underwater images and (2) were top shots of salmon in a stream. Seldom are these animals documented in their own environment or the lens focused on what that environment looks like. The public may have a vague notion of what “woody debris” in a stream looks like, however the chances are good that they have a fairly well articulated image of what a coral reef looks like and what animals might inhabit such an environment. Pressure on freshwater environments is escalating as the demands from agriculture, industry, urban municipalities and the uncertainties of climate change play out across its surface and little awareness is given to what lies beneath. As fisheries professionals we can help to facilitate greater understanding and awareness of freshwater environments through education and outreach and by employing images that document the complexity of life in these realms. Truly “a picture is worth a thousand words” and the power of images to foster our curiosity and engage our imaginations also brings into focus the extraordinary in the ordinary.

You don't have to be a professional photographer to begin to add to your library of images. Water proof digital point and shoot cameras are inexpensive and a valuable tool for documenting a variety of field applications. Understanding your equipment, its limitations and the conditions you will be shooting in will greatly increase your success in documenting field work and photographing underwater environments.

Biography: I work as a professional photographer in Joseph, Oregon and as a fisheries biologist for the Nez Perce Tribe. My work is currently on display at two local galleries in Joseph and can also be viewed online at maryedwardsphotography.com. My greatest source of inspiration is drawn from the natural world and from those life perspectives that at first glance appear quite ordinary, but upon closer examination are quite extraordinary.