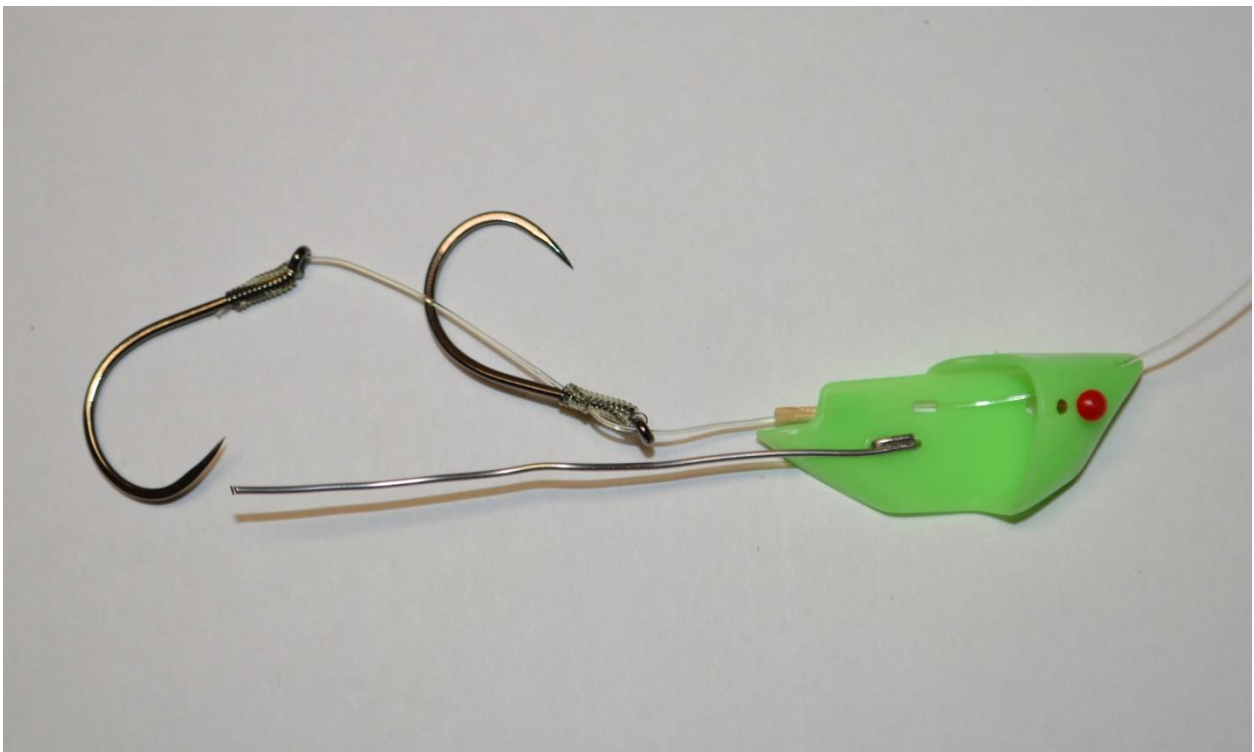


Flasher and Anchovy

On the west coast of Vancouver Island and closer to Vancouver flasher and anchovy is often the fishing method of choice. It is very effective in midsummer when schools of anchovies push north into the area, and anytime there are a lot of sand lance or immature herring around and the salmon are feeding on small bait.

There are many different anchovy teaser head colour combinations available. I keep it simple and use green glow in green water conditions and blue or purple haze when the water clears.

The traditional method is to use a Rhys Davis anchovy teaser head with a tensioning toothpick and lead treble hook, set to bend the anchovy into a gentle curve. However anchovies are soft and quickly take on a sharp bend just behind the gills, ruining the roll. A better method is to rig the teaser head with a piece of 18 gauge (0.0403 inch diameter) stainless steel wire which is inserted in the anchovy parallel to the backbone, holding the curve and providing a very reliable roll. This wire is readily available at marine supply stores where it is sold as "locking wire".



Wired Rigged Anchovy Teaser Head

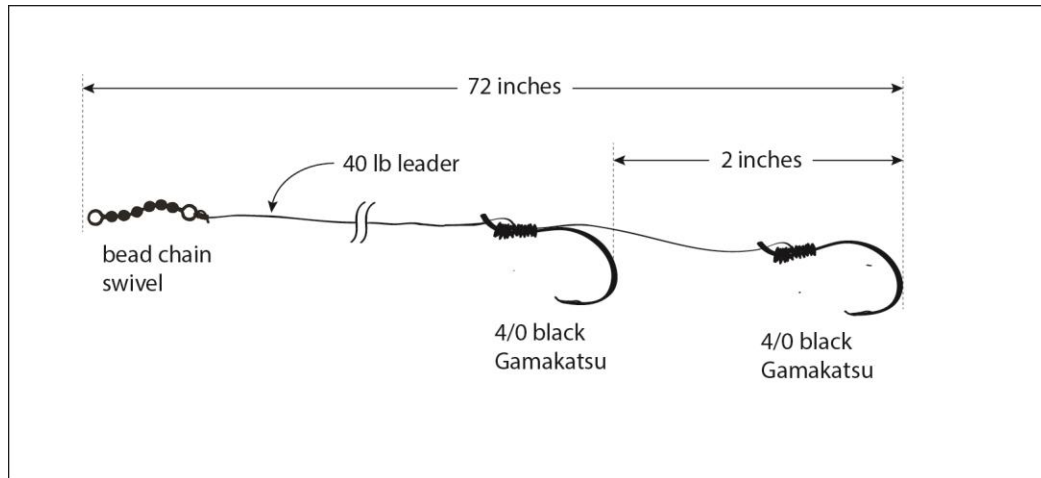
Most anchovy teaser heads are predrilled with two small holes for the wire. A four inch piece of wire works well (this is longer than necessary, in the boat compare it to the length of the bait and cut the wire so it ends just past the dorsal fin). Insert the wire into the anchovy and bend the bait into a gentle curve. I prefer a "bullet roll", similar to a spinning pencil. The greater the bend in the anchovy the wider the roll.



Top View Showing Lead Hook Placement

Many fishermen use a #4 or #2 treble as the lead hook, which works well for the smaller salmon. In my experience the treble reduces the chances of a missed strike but can pull out during a long fight with a big chinook. Trebles also make it difficult to release smaller salmon -- coho in particular tend to tangle the line very badly with trebles. For these reasons I generally use a pair of single hooks. Pass the lead hook through the anchovy so the point sticks out on the opposite side and leave the trailing hook hanging free with the end roughly level with the tail of the anchovy. Use the tensioning toothpick to take up any slack in the leader.

My leaders are similar to the ones I use for cut plug and teaser head herring, but with a closer spacing between the hooks and heavier line due to the flasher. I begin with a seven foot piece of 40 lb Maxima Ultragreen line and tie in a 4/0 Gamakatsu trailer using the bumper knot, followed by the 4/0 Gamakatsu lead hook with a separation of two inches between the end of the lead hook and the end of the trailing hook (I admit that these hooks look enormous beside a little anchovy, but we are fishing for big salmon).



Anchovy Leader

A big advantage of wire rigging the teaser head anchovy is that the roll is reliable and the in-line flasher is not required to provide action. I often run a “naked” wire rigged anchovy teaser head above a dummy flasher, for example when I’m using my light rod.

One of the tricks when fishing anchovy is to ensure that the bait is well salted so it remains stiff in the water. Most guides use a small cooler, the bottom of which is the same size as a tray of anchovies. The open package of frozen anchovies is placed in the bottom of the cooler and is covered with rock salt (no water), then left for a day before being used. The result is a tough, leathery anchovy which holds its shape well while fishing.

I’ve found that with the wire rigged teaser head I can use a recently thawed or brined anchovy, which I believe is more natural and might smell better to the salmon. I prefer a highly concentrated brine solution. When personal fishing near home I usually mix 1.25 cups (10 ounces by volume) of pickling salt with one litre of very hot water, stir thoroughly and let it cool. Place the frozen anchovies in a small plastic container, add the brine and put it in the refrigerator overnight. This is perfect for brining one package of anchovies, doesn’t take up much space and the bait keeps very well.

Perhaps because of the small size of the bait and the presence of the flasher the strikes are usually very aggressive, with the salmon hitting the bait hard and often knocking the line off the downrigger release clip. This is much easier for a novice than fishing teaser head herring or cut plug herring and is a very effective fishing method.

And an important consideration is that the immature salmon love small bait. If there are a lot of them in the area please change your gear.

Bill Haymond is author of “The Science of Salmon Fishing”, which is available at www.thescienceofsalmonfishing.com.