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Three-volume reference a comprehensive record of Salish Sea fish species

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Not all cultural events take place on stage or on canvas, sometimes the shelves of a bookstore can be the setting for a unique offering.

The owners of Campbell River's Coho Books are excited about a remarkable resource book the store has acquired entitled, Fishes of the Salish Sea. This three volume set was 30 years in the making, and features over 1,000 pages of visually stunning and scientifically accurate information. This unique publication is available locally at Coho Books.

"This comprehensive and very beautiful set of books will have great appeal to local fishing and tour guides as well as marine biologists and wildlife enthusiasts," said Jane Toso, Co-owner of Coho Books, "It is an exciting addition to our marine life collection."

The set has been compiled by University of Washington Emeritus Professor of Fisheries Science Theodore Pietsch and Alaska Fisheries Science Center biologist James Wilder Orr, with illustrations by the internationally acclaimed fish illustrator Joseph R. Tomelleri.

In describing the project, Pietsch notes that the trio of books is the most comprehensive record available of known fish species in the region, with the 260 species covered representing a 15 per cent increase over the last published survey nearly 40 years ago.

“It’s quite astonishing to think that people haven’t really known what’s here in any detail,” Pietsch said. “In preparing this book, we’ve really turned over every stone to make sure we have every fish species ever recorded from our inland marine waters.”

Beginning with jawless hagfishes and lampreys and ending with the distinctive Ocean Sunfish, the set of books reflects the most current scientific knowledge and will prove invaluable to all who want to learn about, marvel over, and preserve the vibrant diversity of Salish Sea marine life.

Readers will enjoy finding:

- Comprehensive accounts of 260 fish species
- Brilliant colour plates of all treated species
- Illustrated taxonomic keys for easy species identification
- In-depth history of Salish Sea research and exploration

According to the University of Washington, “Fishes of the Salish Sea will be useful for scientists, anglers, educators and others in identifying Salish fishes, tracking the distribution and abundance of known species, assessing the health of their habitat and determining when these populations might be in danger of disappearing. Pietsch and Orr scoured multiple sources to determine whether each species listed in the book lives or was known to live in the Salish Sea region. Their primary source was the vast fish collection of the Burke Museum—which contains more than 12 million specimens—and they looked also at other major fish collections along the West Coast, including those at the University of British Columbia, the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, B.C., and the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.”

“We’ve provided a baseline of the fishes in the Salish and areas needed for future studies,” Orr said. “The first step in understanding an ecosystem is to identify the elements within it. No matter how closely related, each species has its own life history trajectory – its development, reproduction and ecology – that makes its contribution to an ecosystem unique and, if lost, irreplaceable.”

Sylvia Earle National Geographic Explorer in Residence, said “Art and science collide magnificently in this monumental three-volume celebration of the 260 species of fishes that infuse the inland marine waters of Washington State and British Columbia with hidden beauty, remarkable diversity and intriguing ways of living.”

Daniel Pauly Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia, had this to say about the books, "I am impressed by the thoroughness of the coverage of the fish fauna of the Salish Sea, but also by the historical review, including the biographies of ichthyologists and other naturalists who worked on Puget Sound and the Georgia and Juan de Fuca Straits."

Link: <https://www.campbellrivermirror.com/community/three-volume-reference-a-comprehensive-record-of-salish-sea-fish-species/>