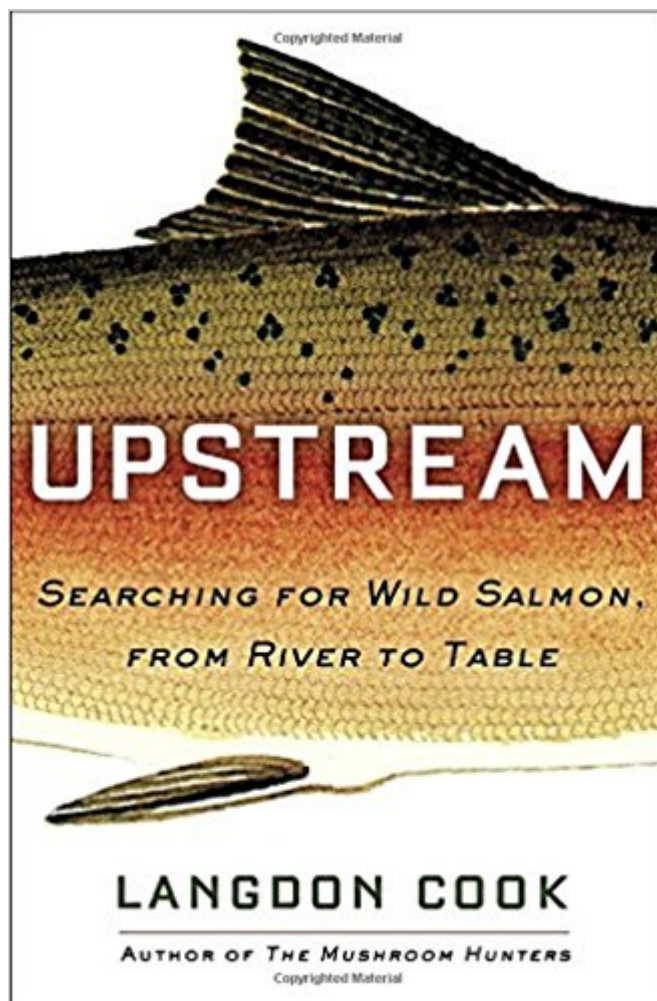


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# Upstream: Searching For Wild Salmon, From River To Table



## Synopsis

From the award-winning author of *The Mushroom Hunters* comes the story of an iconic fish, perhaps the last great wild food: salmon. For some, a salmon evokes the distant wild, thrashing in the jaws of a hungry grizzly bear on TV. For others, it's the catch of the day on a restaurant menu, or a deep red fillet at the market. For others still, it's the jolt of adrenaline on a successful fishing trip. Our fascination with these superlative fish is as old as humanity itself. Long a source of sustenance among native peoples, salmon is now more popular than ever. Fish hatcheries and farms serve modern appetites with a domesticated "product" while wild runs of salmon dwindle across the globe. How has this once-abundant resource reached this point, and what can we do to safeguard wild populations for future generations? Langdon Cook goes in search of the salmon in *Upstream*, his timely and in-depth look at how these beloved fish have nourished humankind through the ages and why their destiny is so closely tied to our own. Cook journeys up and down salmon country, from the glacial rivers of Alaska to the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest to California's drought-stricken Central Valley and a wealth of places in between. Reporting from remote coastlines and busy city streets, he follows today's commercial pipeline from fisherman's net to corporate seafood vendor to boutique marketplace. At stake is nothing less than an ancient livelihood. But salmon are more than food. They are game fish, wildlife spectacle, sacred totem, and inspiration—and their fate is largely in our hands. Cook introduces us to tribal fishermen handing down an age-old tradition, sport anglers seeking adventure and a renewed connection to the wild, and scientists and activists working tirelessly to restore salmon runs. In sharing their stories, Cook covers all sides of the debate: the legacy of overfishing and industrial development; the conflicts between fishermen, environmentalists, and Native Americans; the modern proliferation of fish hatcheries and farms; and the longstanding battle lines of science versus politics, wilderness versus civilization. This firsthand account is reminiscent of the work of John McPhee and Mark Kurlansky—is filled with the keen insights and observations of the best narrative writing. Cook offers an absorbing portrait of a remarkable fish and the many obstacles it faces, while taking readers on a fast-paced fishing trip through salmon country. *Upstream* is an essential look at the intersection of man, food, and nature. Praise for *Upstream* "Invigorating . . . Mr. Cook is a congenial and intrepid companion, happily hiking into hinterlands and snorkeling in headwaters. Along the way we learn about filleting techniques, native cooking methods and self-pollinating almond trees, and his continual curiosity ensures that the narrative unfurls gradually, like a long spey cast. . . . With a pedigree that includes Mark Kurlansky, John McPhee and Roderick

Haig-Brown, Mr. Cook's style is suitably fluent, an occasional phrase flashing like a flank in the current. . . . For all its rehearsal of the perils and vicissitudes facing Pacific salmon, *Upstream* remains a celebration. •The Wall Street Journal• "Passionate . . . Cook deftly conveys his love of nature, the beauty of the Pacific Northwest, and the delectable eating provided by fresh caught wild salmon. •Library Journal• "Insightful . . . this work is a great place to learn what needs to be done and an entertaining view on the positive and negative connections humans have with the natural environment. •Publishers Weekly

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Invigorating . . . At the heart of *Upstream* is a journey—the oldest shape in literature. . . . In tracing the history and life cycle of these iconic creatures, Mr. Cook embarks on a series of his own journeys—fourteen nicely episodic chapters that explore how and where such fish still survive in the modern world, despite the threats of logging, dams, the diversion of running water for domestic and commercial uses, overfishing, and climate change. It is a saga that has been told before but seldom with such immediacy and panache. . . . Throughout these sorties, Mr. Cook is a congenial and intrepid companion, happily hiking into hinterlands and snorkeling in headwaters. Along the way we learn about filleting techniques, native cooking methods and self-pollinating almond trees, and his continual curiosity ensures that the narrative unfurls gradually, like a long spey cast. . . . With a pedigree that includes Mark Kurlansky, John McPhee and Roderick

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•The Wall Street Journal "Cook deftly conveys his love of nature, the beauty of the Pacific Northwest, and the delectable eating provided by fresh caught wild salmon. . . . Fishers, environmentalists, naturalists, and armchair travelers will enjoy this passionate and well-written account.

•Library Journal "Cook tackles a Pacific Northwest icon in this wide-ranging exploration of the region's most famous fish. From the opening pages, bearing witness to shoppers at Pike Place Market and considering the outrageous marketing success of the annual Copper River salmon season, Cook proves himself equally at home fishing in the wildest of rivers and chatting with salesmen and chefs. . . .

Cook's salmon travelogue easily appeals to anglers, salmon eaters, nature lovers, and everyone in between. The Pacific salmon is a great American fish, and by writing about it with such care and curiosity, Cook establishes its ecological importance and tells a great American story.

•Booklist "In this insightful book, Cook clearly outlines scientific information about the species of fish commonly known as salmon. . . . But the focus here is less on facts and research and more on how Pacific salmon culture in North America is a dance between fish and humanity.

•For those who want to . . . see the salmon recapture its former glory, this work is a great place to learn what needs to be done and an entertaining view on the positive and negative connections humans have with the natural environment.

•Publishers Weekly "Exposing striking human-salmon parallels, these stories tell of settlement and cultural clashes, of life cycles and migrations, of deforestation and industrial agriculture, of racism and gentrification, and [Langdon] Cook skillfully illustrates the interconnectedness of it all. Seeking the wild in a landscape fraught with man-made alteration and annihilation, the author interrogates the nature of wildness, posing urgent, provocative questions. . . . Blurring boundaries and complicating the oversimplified, Cook provides a moving, artfully layered story of strength and vulnerability, offering glimpses of hope for growing humility and reverence and for shifting human-nature relationships.

•Kirkus Reviews "Langdon Cook delivers a beautifully written portrait of the iconic salmon that blends history, biology, contentious politics, and the joy of fishing into a captivating and thought-provoking tale. Like a great meal, *Upstream* is thrilling, deeply satisfying, and memorable. After reading it, you will understand why salmon are worth fighting for.

•Eric Jay Dolin, author of *Brilliant Beacons* "Salmon are the essence of the Pacific Northwest, and as Langdon Cook shows so powerfully, they are the key to its

future. From the wild flats of Alaska's Copper River to the straitjacketed creeks of California, Upstream captures the myriad ways people and salmon are deeply intertwined. To read this book is to see through Cook's sharp eyes the tragedy, mystery, and promise of this magnificent fish we quite literally can't afford to lose.

—Rowan Jacobsen, author of *The Essential Oyster*

“In this fresh tale of an ancient wonder, Langdon Cook takes us on an inspired journey of discovery through the heart and soul of salmon country, introducing us to the charismatic fish and people behind the meal.”

—David R. Montgomery, author of *King of Fish* and *Growing a Revolution*

“Even as salmon populations draw near the brink of collapse, salmon conservation is thriving in the twenty-first century. Upstream introduces the next generation of conservationists, more focused on science and collaboration as a pathway toward recovery than on lawsuits. In the process, Cook takes the reader on a thrilling adventure through the mountains, rivers, farmlands, and kitchens where progress, against all odds, is being made.”

—Zeb Hogan, biologist and host of *Nat Geo Wild's* *Monster Fish*

Langdon Cook is the author of *The Mushroom Hunters: On the Trail of an Underground America*, winner of the Pacific Northwest Book Award, and *Fat of the Land: Adventures of a 21st Century Forager*. His writing has appeared in numerous newspapers, magazines, and online journals. A nominee for the 2016 James Beard Award, Cook lives in Seattle.

Having spent decades fishing for wild trout in the arid Rockies of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Montana, I had never given salmon much consideration. After reading this and getting my first taste from afar, I am thrilled to have booked a trip to Cordova, Alaska to get my first taste. Long overdue. I'm counting the days until August. I'm also sending a check to support salmon conservation in the Pacific Northwest. This book is rich with scientific and historical facts woven into a tableau of real-life human characters that bring the data to vivid life. Cook is obviously a masterful writer, placing himself in the center of the action without competing with or crowding the many people he writes about. Although the subject lies squarely in the middle of Planet Earth's terrible predicament, and there is plenty here to feel bad about (not the least of which is my family's ongoing dealings with Hampton Lumber), this is not a tragedy. Rather, this book is inspiration for what future generations can (and will) accomplish in bringing back this battered but not yet broken miracle of evolution. The book is not an eco-manifesto, it's a story of how humans and salmon have coexisted through time, and how the future of these amazing fish depends not solely on lawsuits and politicians, but on the aggregate consciousness of everyday people. A wonderful read!

Wonderful reading for both the salmon fisherman and seafood chef! While I don't necessarily agree with his dire forecasts of disappearing salmon runs, I felt his research and explanations of some of our problems maintaining the native salmon habitat were informative.

Enjoyed this book immensely

Great information.

This is a well-written journey through the rivers and coastal areas where wild salmon are found, but in most cases are sadly no longer or just barely in existence. Although my interest in reading the book came more from the salmon side than the fishing end, I found the tales of those who hunt salmon to be just as compelling as the history of wild salmon and what the future may or may not hold in store for them. The book takes the reader through the vast Columbia River territory to Alaska, California, Idaho and everywhere in between, in search of where wild salmon may still be found - and if not, why not. The story is ultimately one of the uphill battle to try and save the natural areas where wild salmon are still found - albeit in dwindling numbers - before it is too late, as well as the efforts to return areas damaged by thoughtless river-damming to their former states in a bid to see a resurgence of wild salmon in those areas. It's also a tale of the fishermen who want to save the wild salmon because of the pleasure they get in hunting for those fish and their desire to one day land a really big king. As a non-fisherperson, the book helped me understand that seemingly incompatible notion, although I still am not sold on the concept of catch-and-release as described in the book, which still seems cruel and somewhat barbaric to the non-fisher. The book does become repetitive after a while to the point where one feels that each fishing trip is only going to result in Cook making his already convincingly well-made points about conservation again and again and again. I have to admit that, after a while, I started to wonder if the latter chapters were there only because they represented more fishing trips for the author. In addition to the receptiveness, the last chapter feels somewhat gratuitous. It's a let's-beat-them-over-the-head-just-to-make-sure-they-get-it chapter that seems somewhat forced and written as if the author doesn't believe he's gotten his message across forcefully enough. The conclusion fairly sinks into groan-worthy territory when a conversation relayed to him by a conservationist is recounted, during which an old, grey-haired canal supervisor, who by virtue of his job had once been on the opposite side of the debate, optimistically says that things are going to get better because of all the young liberal people. "But it's

gonna take a while," he says, "because a bunch of people my age still need to die."With that, the book comes full circle in the weirdest of philosophical ways from its early journey up the Columbia River to a Native American town where the elderly are revered because they are the ones who can remember the old times.The bottom line:This is very well-written and exhaustively empirically-researched book that goes a long way toward convincing readers of the need for serious conservation efforts with specific regard to the wild salmon. It would be 5 stars but for so much repetition (although people who fish might really enjoy reading about fishing trip after fishing trip) and a conclusion that makes it seem as though the reader must not be smart enough to get the entire. rest. of. the. book.

This book was an excellent, enlightening read. I took it with me on a field research trip because I like to read natural history books while traveling, and I assumed I wouldn't have much time for reading or energy left at the end of the day so I wanted to bring something light. This book was so absorbing that despite 12-16 hour workdays followed by group dinners and almost no downtime, I managed to steal reading time by shoehorning it into my mornings, and finished it on the trip home. As well as being engrossing and superbly written, it details the plight of the salmon -- and the people who depend on them -- in gorgeous, heartwrenching prose that highlights the madness of an economic system that destroys abundant food to gain access to money, which is supposed to represent the very natural resources we eradicate. We are mired in this sunken-cost fallacy so deeply that we are willing to sacrifice our own health, well-being, and the natural resources on which all economic resources are based in the pursuit of upholding an ideal of controlling nature that should have gone out of style with fashions of the Roosevelt era. This book is superb and I highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in wild fish, the environment, or natural resource management.

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