

The Columbian
Life

Section D

Today's weather picture by Joshua Boes, 9, Battle Ground, Captain Strong Elementary



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The play's the thing for kids, study says

Pediatricians say playtime is healthy

By LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press writer

CHICAGO — Here's some soothing medicine for stressed-out parents and over-scheduled kids: The American Academy of Pediatrics says what children really need for healthy development is more good, old-fashioned playtime.

Many parents load their children's schedules with get-smart videos, enrichment activities and lots of classes in a drive to help them excel. The efforts often begin as early as infancy.

Spontaneous, free play — whether it's chasing butterflies, playing with "true toys" like blocks and dolls, or just romping on the floor with mom and dad — often is sacrificed in the shuffle, a new academy report says.

Jennifer Gervasio has a 5-year-old son and 3-year-old

daughter involved in preschool three mornings weekly, plus T-ball and ballet for each one day a week. That's a light schedule compared to her kids' friends, and Gervasio said her son in particular has trouble finding buddies who are free to come over and just play.

"There's just such a huge variety of things you can do for your kids if you have the resources, you almost feel why not," said Gervasio, of Wilmette, Ill. "There is a part of me that would worry if I don't sign my son up for some of these things, will he not be on par with the other kids."

For now, she says, she resists the pressure, instead allowing her kids plenty of time for looking for bugs, romping at the beach and other play activities they love to do.

"I truly believe that they're better off when they can just do their own thing," Gervasio said.

Numerous studies have shown that unstructured play has many benefits. It can help children become creative, discover their own passions, develop problem-solving skills, relate to others and adjust to school settings, the academy report says.

"Perhaps above all, play is a simple joy that is a cherished part of childhood," says the report, prepared by two academy committees. A lack of spontaneous playtime can create stress for children and parents alike. If it occurs because young children are plopped in front of get-smart videos or older children lose school recess time, it can increase risks for obesity. It may even contribute to depression for many children, the report says.

Social pressures and marketing pitches about creating "super children" contribute to a lack of playtime for many families. But so does living in low-income, violence-prone neighborhoods where safe places to play are scarce, the report says.

It says enrichment tools and organized activities can be beneficial but should not be viewed as a requirement for creating successful children. Above all, they must be balanced with plenty of free play time, the report says.

Catching farewell tour



One of the thousands of salmon returning to spawn this month in creeks and rivers in Southwest Washington. This photo was shot recently at Salmon Falls on the Washougal River.

Photos by JANET L. MATHEWS/The Columbian

FIVE TIPS FOR WATCHING THE FALL SALMON RUN

1. Wear polarized sunglasses. Glare from the sun on the water can help to hide the fish.
2. Go in the morning or in the early afternoon. High sun makes the fish want to hide. They are most active on rainy days, when the rivers are rushing and swollen.
3. Start at a hatchery, where the salmon stock is highest. Natural settings can be found nearby.
4. Look in the shade. Salmon get spooked by sun and clear water. They prefer moving water.
5. Don't trespass. State and federal agencies have created numerous public viewing areas in Southwest Washington to witness the cyclical salmon runs.

SOURCES: Speros Doulos, manager of the Little White Salmon and Willard national fish hatcheries, and Luke Miller, specialist at Washougal Salmon Hatchery.

Our area offers many sites to enjoy spectacle of salmon returning to waterways to spawn

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
Columbian staff writer

Those who look closely will see more than just the leaves turning brown this time of year. Salmon of all sorts are making their fall runs up Southwest Washington's rivers and creeks.

As they near the end of their journeys (and lives), their once shiny and colorful bodies dim to rusty reds and muddy browns.

"This is right when the fall chinook are returning," said Speros Doulos, manager of the Little White Salmon and Willard national fish hatcheries. "They come in big schools, and the rivers just fill with them."

Spawning runs also happen in the spring and in December in Southwest Washington, but fish experts consider October an ideal time to watch the cyclical migration.

Depending on the place, spectators can spot a variety of salmon spawning. That ranges from the small red kokanee, a land-locked sockeye, that



Tracing waterways back from local hatcheries leads to picturesque sites, such as this jumping point at Salmon Falls.

weighs about a half-pound, to the fall chinook. Chinook are the largest local species, weighing from 15 to 45 pounds.

At the Bonneville Dam viewing stations, about 1,000 coho, 1,000 steelhead and 2,000 chinook pass the observation areas daily. The public access points in this area enable visitors to get within a few feet of the large salmon.

That front-row seat is the most spectacular in the fall, says Dennis Schwartz, fisheries biologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"The amount of fish you can see, the amount of species."

The best viewing is when weather conditions are the least pleasant for visitors.

"They will move the most during a rain," said Luke Miller, fish hatcheries

specialist at the Washougal Salmon Hatchery. "The flow of the river. The scent of rain. ... As soon as the flow kicks up, they start cruising. And when they are moving, they are jumping. Any little waterfall. Through shallow spots."

Though there are a lot of rivers and creeks in this area, not all are flush with fish. Hatcheries were built where the activity was historically the highest. Part of the local fisheries' job is to help the public understand and connect with this part of nature.

"If you get lucky, maybe you can see them jump a log in a river. Or a rock," Miller says. "They do jump randomly. Maybe you'll see one (in the wild), but you might not. It's kind of like seeing a deer. ... The best place to see fish jumping is right here at the hatchery."

Salmon hatcheries in Southwest Washington

Fallert Creek Salmon Hatchery

■ **Location:** 4400 Kalama River Road, about 5 miles east of Kalama.
 ■ **Amenities:** The early Coho run in October fills Fallert Creek, as the fish make their way to a large holding pond in the hatchery. The facility raises yearling steelhead and salmon (fall and spring Chinook and Coho) the rest of the year, including 2.5 million fall Chinook.
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-673-4400 or 360-673-4825.

Kalama Falls Hatchery

■ **Location:** 4404 Lewis River Road, about 7 miles east of Woodland.

■ **Amenities:** Fish ladder viewing area. Rearing ponds for spring Chinook and Coho. Historical photos, demonstrating the salmon hatchery process and its evolution into modern times; first of three hatcheries within 15 miles of each other off Lewis River Road (also Merwin and Speelyai hatcheries).
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-225-7413.

Lewis River Salmon Hatchery

■ **Location:** 4404 Lewis River Road, about 7 miles east of Woodland.

■ **Amenities:** Fish ladder viewing area. Rearing ponds for spring Chinook and Coho. Historical photos, demonstrating the salmon hatchery process and its evolution into modern times; first of three hatcheries within 15 miles of each other off Lewis River Road (also Merwin and Speelyai hatcheries).
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-225-7413.

Merwin Hatchery

■ **Location:** 4404 Lewis River Road, about 7 miles east of Woodland.

■ **Amenities:** Fish ladder viewing area. Rearing ponds for spring Chinook and Coho. Historical photos, demonstrating the salmon hatchery process and its evolution into modern times; first of three hatcheries within 15 miles of each other off Lewis River Road (also Merwin and Speelyai hatcheries).
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-225-7413.

Speelyai Hatchery

■ **Location:** 4404 Lewis River Road, about 7 miles east of Woodland.

■ **Amenities:** Fish ladder viewing area. Rearing ponds for spring Chinook and Coho. Historical photos, demonstrating the salmon hatchery process and its evolution into modern times; first of three hatcheries within 15 miles of each other off Lewis River Road (also Merwin and Speelyai hatcheries).
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-225-7413.

Washougal Salmon Hatchery

■ **Location:** 15632 Washougal River Road, about 16 miles east of Washougal.

■ **Amenities:** A 185-foot long and 100-foot-wide asphalt pond, 5 feet deep, that holds adult salmon, plus 24 smaller ponds for fingerlings; incubation area; picnic table; campground nearby, with camp sites and picnic; about two miles west of Dougan Falls.
 ■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; spawning on Tuesday mornings in October.
 ■ **Telephone:** 360-837-3311.

Willard National Fish Hatchery

■ **Location:** 56961 state Highway 14, in Cook, Wash., about 13 miles east of Stevenson.

■ **Amenities:** Indoor fish viewing windows. Outdoor viewing deck that overlooks the Little White Salmon River. Historical displays. Willard National Fish Hatchery is nearby, 5 miles to the north.
 ■ **Hours:** 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 509-538-2755.
 ■ **On the Web:** www.fws.gov/gorgefish/littlewhite.

Bonneville Dam

■ **Location:** About 40 miles east of Vancouver, on state Highway 14.

■ **Amenities:** Indoor fish viewing windows, with access to both the Oregon and Washington shores. Outdoor viewing of fish ladders. Adjacent hatchery (Tanner Creek). Various interpretive exhibits related to the cycles of the salmon run, including area history.
 ■ **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
 ■ **Telephone:** 509-427-4281.
 ■ **On the Web:** www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/b/home.asp.

Did you know?

■ The Salmon Run Bell Tower glockenspiel in Esther Short Park presents scenes from a Chinook Indian legend and ceremony related to the fish. The \$290,000 attraction, the first publicly operated glockenspiel on the West Coast, plays the story at noon, 2, 4, 6 and 8 p.m. daily.

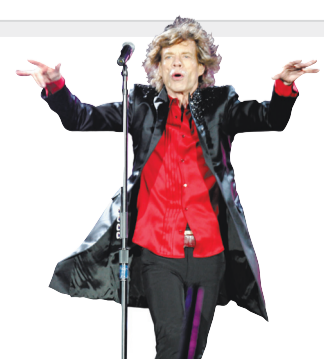
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