

MUSEUM MUSINGS FOR NOVEMBER 2010

We have been thrilled with the sight of fish jumping in Gillies Bay this past week. It has been years since we have seen this and it fills us with hope that our salmon enhancement projects might be bearing fruit so to speak. The fish jumping include coho, chum and sea run trout that follow the spawning salmon in to feast on the eggs. The Gillies Bay creek does not yet have enough water to allow the salmon to reach the spawning grounds so the fish will hang around until some signal only they understand will spur them up the creek. It's wonderful to realise that these fish are following the same route that their ancestors took hundreds of years ago. We know this because the remnants of fish weirs can still be seen on the west side of Gillies Bay and in Mouat Bay. The weirs run for hundreds of yards and the runs must have been enormous to enable the system to work. These weirs have been identified by the Archaeological Branch of the provincial government as being two hundred to two hundred and fifty years old and are protected as historic features. Our photo today is of the remains of weirs in Gillies Bay with Dick Island in the background. These can be seen from where Cedar Street reaches the shore along Sanderson Road. Stephen Irwin in his book *Hunters of the Sea* describes how the weir system worked; "Tidal fluctuations were effectively utilised to catch great numbers of salmon. Amassed at river mouths and along beaches before ascending to their spawning grounds, the milling salmon rode the tidal drifts as the tides ebbed and flowed. Great semi-circular stone fences were constructed well below the high tide line. During the high tide the unsuspecting salmon lolled with the flow over the top of the trap. As the tide ebbed, the top of the stone fence stuck up above the water and prevented the fish from returning to the sea." Until next time take care of each other and remember to think and act green.
Norm MacLean

