

Dan, Brian, and Tom with the fish they pulled in simultaneously.



MULTIPLICITY in MONTI BAY

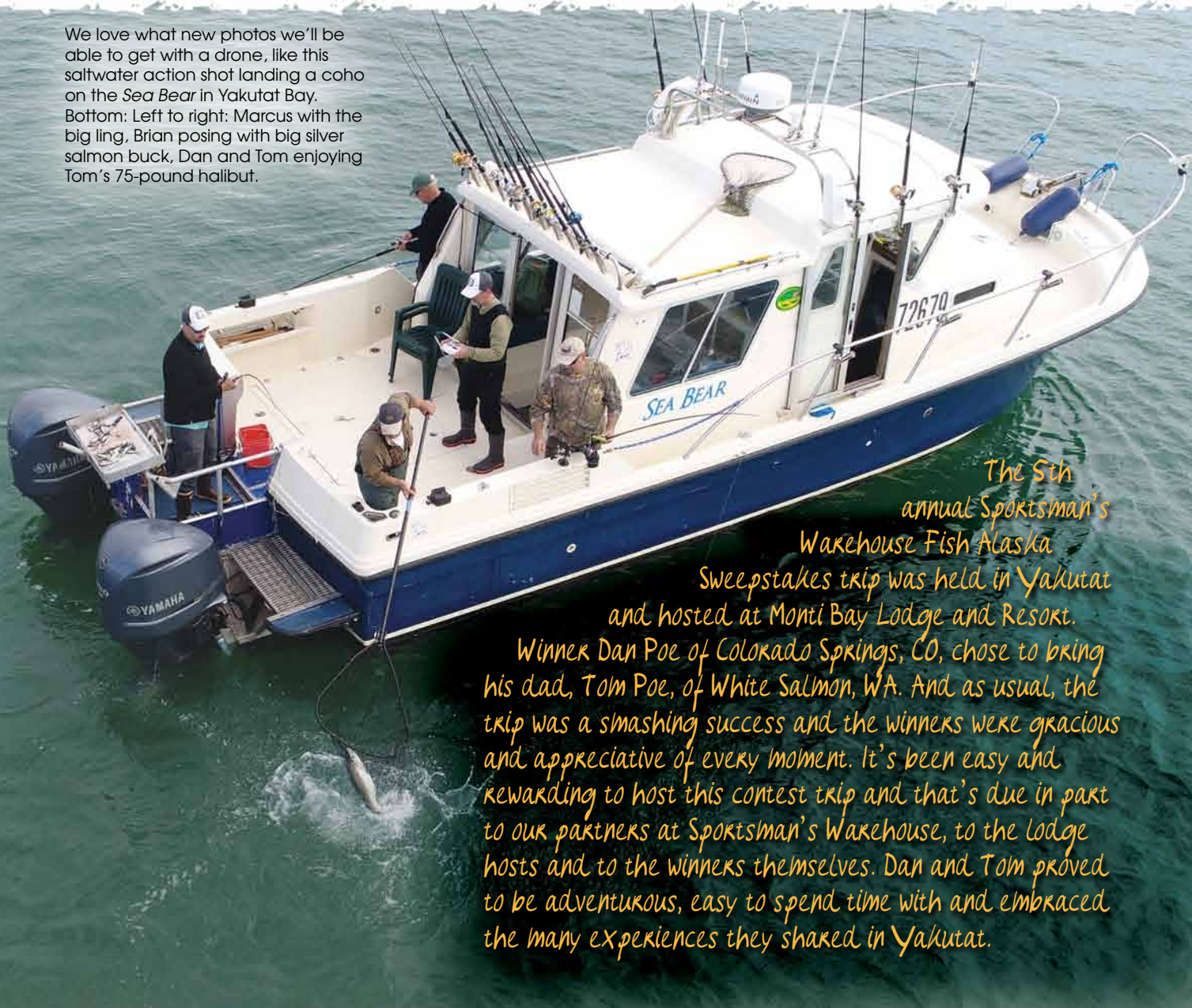
A SPORTSMAN'S WAREHOUSE CONTEST ADVENTURE

Story by Marcus Weiner • Photos by Brian Woobank



A drone's view of
Monti Bay Lodge.

We love what new photos we'll be able to get with a drone, like this saltwater action shot landing a coho on the Sea Bear in Yakutat Bay. Bottom: Left to right: Marcus with the big ling, Brian posing with big silver salmon buck, Dan and Tom enjoying Tom's 75-pound halibut.



The 5th annual Sportsman's Warehouse Fish Alaska

Sweepstakes trip was held in Yakutat and hosted at Monti Bay Lodge and Resort.

Winner Dan Poe of Colorado Springs, CO, chose to bring his dad, Tom Poe, of White Salmon, WA. And as usual, the trip was a smashing success and the winners were gracious and appreciative of every moment. It's been easy and rewarding to host this contest trip and that's due in part to our partners at Sportsman's Warehouse, to the lodge hosts and to the winners themselves. Dan and Tom proved to be adventurous, easy to spend time with and embraced the many experiences they shared in Yakutat.





The load from the day's catch on the Sea Bear yielded about 225 pounds of succulent fillets.

Catching shrimp added a delicious addition to our dinners.



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Brian Woobank, contributing photographer and expert in all things Yakutat, joined me to help orchestrate the event. We put together an itinerary that included both fresh- and saltwater fishing, with both DIY and guided components. My personal goal was to figure out the basics of shrimping and to hopefully catch a few that we could enjoy as appetizers during our stay.

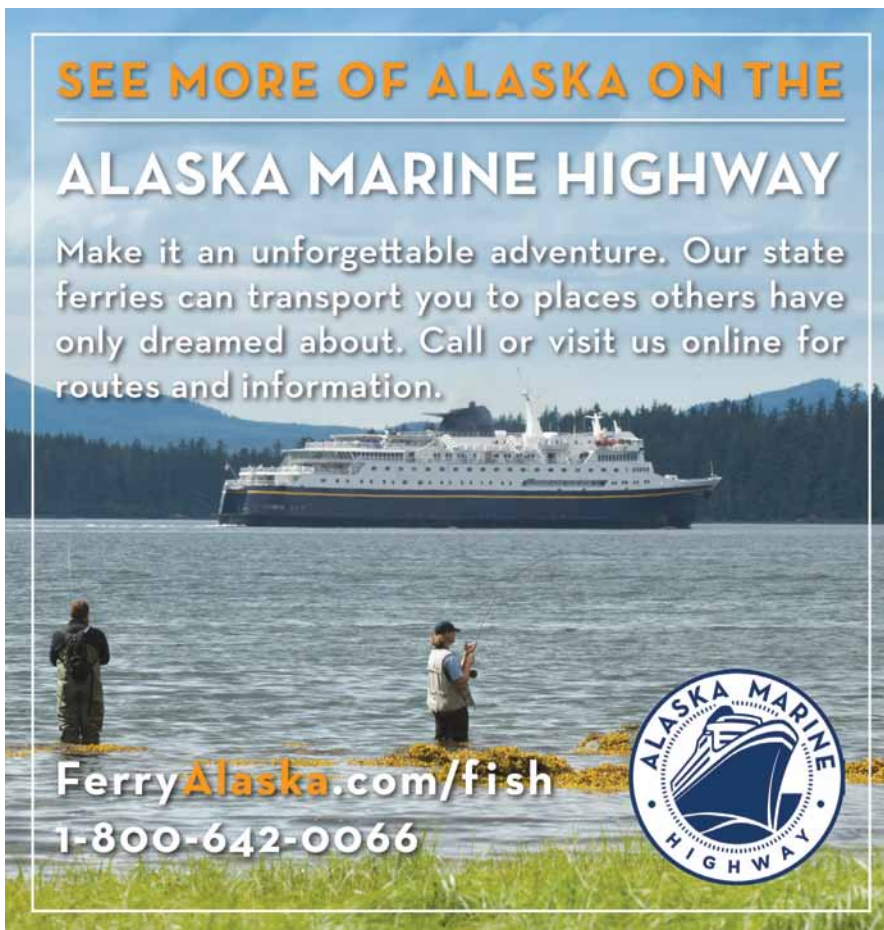
We partnered with Curt Heikell of Monti Bay Lodge and Resort and he reserved the resort property for our stay. It's a very nice 3-bedroom cabin on the water, complete with a high-end kitchen and comfortable dining room. It's some of the nicest digs we've ever enjoyed in Yakutat.

To round out the luxury experience, Curt arranged for a full-time chef to cook our meals. Cynthia Peterson made breakfast, lunch and dinner for us each day and the meals were scrumptious. Her seafood dinners were especially memorable and she prepared salmon, halibut, shrimp and scallops in a variety of mouth-watering ways.

We set an itinerary for four days of fishing, which began with a half-day saltwater salmon charter. Special thanks to our friends at Yakutat Lodge for putting that together. After a short ride into Yakutat Bay we began to mooch for silvers. The boat was captained by Ralph Piccolo and with a little bit of exploring, he was able to get us onto small schools of coho. We mooched with whole herring, which allowed us to each operate a rod, feel the fish bite the bait, take line and then we'd reel down to set the hook. After a little practice, we were each rigging our own herring to achieve the type of tight roll that drive coho to attack. After a short 4-hour excursion, we boated 23 coho and headed back to the dock. Brian and I filleted the coho at the Yakutat Lodge on the Bay cleaning station, and we headed back to Monti Bay Resort to enjoy a fine meal and revel in the good start. Tom, who has spent many days fishing for coho on the Columbia River, stated that this had been the best day of coho fishing he'd ever seen.

On Day 2, we took out one of the Monti Bay Resort skiffs and prospected for halibut and coho in Monti Bay. Before we began looking for halibut, we set two shrimp pots. Brian garnered some local knowledge as to a nearby location to try, and he also got us some bait used by local fishermen. Using the sonar on the skiff, we looked for the deep channel and set out our gear in about 250 feet of water. Needless to say, we were elated to find a couple quarts of shrimp waiting when we returned at the end of the day. Non-residents can harvest one quart of Alaska Sidestriped shrimp per day. These are some of the most delicious shrimp in the ocean, and eating them as an appetizer before dinner was a special treat.

Halibut fishing was slow for us, but we managed to find coho and we gave it a solid




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This yelloweye was one of several rockfish species landed.

effort looking for bottomfish. Calm water allowed us to prospect for halibut in some likely spots—the trench between the buoy and house not far from the public boat harbor in about 120 feet of water, out in front of the Ahrnklin River from 60- to 100 feet, and we also worked the coho drag on the Khantaak Island side. Monti Bay offers protected water and short boat rides for the DIY angler to find coho and prospect for bottomfish.

The next morning we headed out again in the skiff and headed around the backside of Khantaak Island into a spot called Broken Oar Cove. It was calm and protected back there, with lots of good spots to troll for salmon and prospect for halibut. We had one flatfish on and lost it. After fishing for a few hours, including a stop at a secluded creek to catch and release pinks at its mouth, we retrieved the shrimp from the pots and headed back to the boat harbor so we could drive over to the Situk River. The clouds cleared and blue skies greeted us for an evening of casting on the lower Situk. In a few short hours, we managed to land five coho. Tom and Dan cast Mepps, Blue Fox and Panther Martin spinners and hooked coho at the bottom of the swing while Brian and I looked on. I landed the fish for the



winners, while Brian captured the experience with the camera on his drones.

On the last day of the trip, our itinerary had us in the saltwater with Scott Chadwick of Yakutat Charters on the *Sea Bear* and it turned out to be an epic day. Scott is a very good captain who knows how to fish these waters and he showed us a great time. Calm seas made for a short and easy boat ride and our first target was halibut. In about an hour's time, we had four beautiful halibut in the fish-hold and a good lingcod as well. One halibut eclipsed the 100-pound mark, two were about 75 pounds each and the last one was about 30 pounds. I was thrilled to see four quality halibut onboard in such a short time and that gave us lots of time to focus on other species.

Next stop was to target black rockfish and soon we were landing up to 5-pound specimens. While jigging for rockfish, Brian hooked and landed the first coho, and before long half the boat was mooching for coho while the other half finished a rockfish limit. During one drop, I watched Brian bring in a coho, Dan fought a rockfish and Tom battled a lingcod. All three fish were landed and it reinforced what a special day we were having.

Finally, we moved onto mooching for coho

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Curt Heikell offers two locations for visitors. Monti Bay Lodge includes the Silver Suite, which has 10 beds, the King Suite with 8 beds and the Steelhead Suite, which includes 3 beds. This location is great for both large groups and smaller parties. The units are nicely-appointed, fully furnished and feel like home away from home. Monti Bay Lodge includes a state-of-the-art fish-processing facility, which includes multiple stainless-steel cleaning stations, an industrial vacuum-sealer and a blast freezer.

Monti Bay Resort consists of two cabins that are very nice. This location is well-suited for corporate retreats and for groups looking for a more exclusive property where you can either have a dedicated chef or cook for yourself. We felt secluded in this location and really enjoyed staying there.

Guests at either location can access the four lodge skiffs, which are suited to fish four anglers each. Each group also gets their own van to use, which is plenty spacious to handle passengers, fish boxes and fully assembled rods. A drift boat is also available for anglers who want to float the Situk River. Curt can also help to arrange saltwater charters and fly-out fishing.

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Sportsman's Warehouse is a national retailer offering a wide selection of products used for hunting, archery, fishing, camping, boating and ATV adventures. The company has 87 locations in 21 states and has been growing their number of locations from year to year. We've always found their fishing selection to be first-rate, and for that matter, they offer a great product selection for outdoorsmen in general. Our experience in the Alaska stores has always been positive, as they are staffed with agreeable and helpful people and house plenty of inventory to choose from.



Monti Bay Resort offers solitude, a waterfront view and some of the nicest lodging in Yakutat.

and got into a hot bite. It didn't take long to come close to a full limit of coho and we called it a day and headed in to process the amazing haul of fish. Captain Scott is one of the better saltwater captains I have fished with. His boat is spacious and comfortable, his gear top-notch and his knowledge of the area is excellent.

After spending a few hours filleting fish at the public boat dock cleaning station, Brian and I headed over to Monti Bay Lodge to use the cleaning room to portion the fillets, vacuum-seal the fish and put it into the blast freezer. Upon seeing the setup for the first time, I was instantly impressed. The cleaning room is large and offers multiple stations, the vacuum-sealer is industrial-grade and the blast freezer is awesome! To have a large blast freezer available as part of a DIY trip is unique, and that tool very much helps to get your fish frozen quickly, which preserves the long-term quality of the product.

I want to sincerely thank Curt Heikell for putting together an excellent trip for us. Accommodations were absolutely first rate, skiffs and van were good, food was excellent and the fishing options that we could include were perfect. We caught multiple species in a variety of ways and we even managed to catch enough shrimp to enjoy some each day.

I'd also like to thank Sportsman's Warehouse for working with us to make this possible. Their involvement is critical to the success of the contest and we appreciate working with them and are fans of their stores. And finally, thanks to Dan and Tom Poe for being willing participants in a wide range of activities, for being fun travel companions and for being appreciative for all that was included in the trip.



Marcus Weiner is publisher of Fish Alaska and Hunt Alaska magazine and can be reached at info@fishalaskamagazine.com.

ALASKA

THORNE BAY LODGE

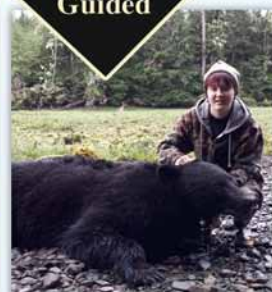
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