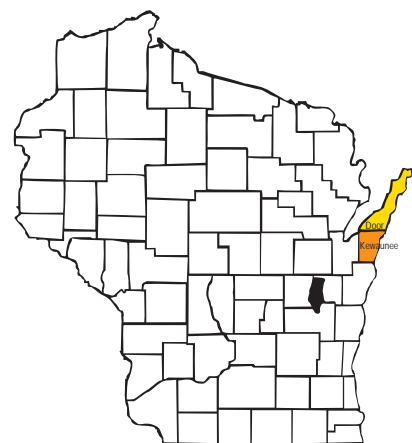


# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts



## Summer Fights

### *King Salmon ready, willing on Great Lakes*

by Dick Ellis



Kevin Naze of Algoma has spent a lifetime landing Lake Michigan king salmon, steelhead and lakereels. (Ellis)

Kevin Naze wasn't yet at the end of his "rope," but with the King Salmon apparently skidattling for Michigan, things were getting too close for comfort. "Six hundred feet," I said as line continued to burn off the reel and the big Chinook continued to show us just who was boss on this shimmering blue block off of Algoma. "650 ... 700 ..."

A king salmon better than 20 pounds was already in the cooler, keeping company with another good chinook and three beautiful steelhead, or Great Lakes

rainbow. With just over three hours on the water far off of Kewaunee County working 200 to 300 feet of water, this bonus Chinook altered all plans of heading to harbor.

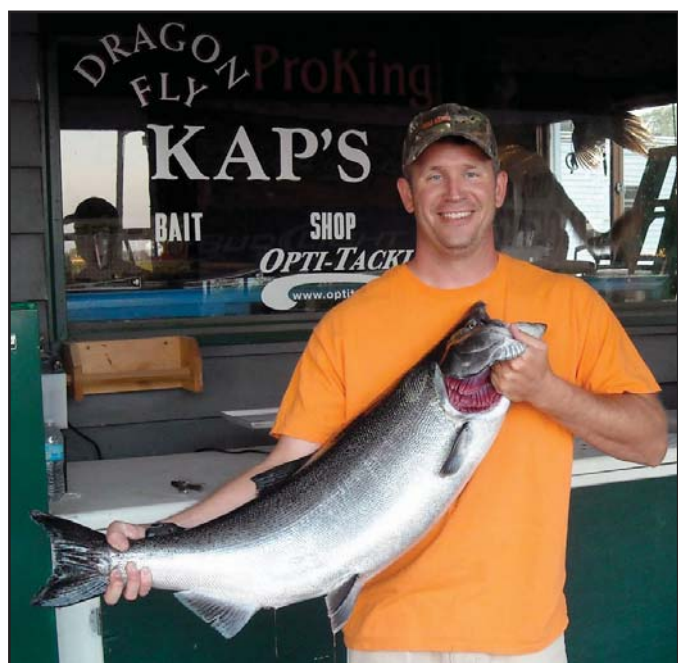
Naze, Algoma-based outdoor writer and lifelong angler on these beautiful waters, kept one eye on the spool as he scrambled to complete the job of retrieving five other lines in preparation for our trip in. I was on the rod, orders of the skipper, but it was solely Naze's expertise that had put us on the fish. Now, if this

King's leash growing longer by the second hit 800 feet, and the fish still wouldn't come to us, Naze would change the game. He would take his old, reliable 18-foot Starcraft to the fish ... or run out of line.

The screaming drag was really music to our ears and a tune that had actually become a bit of a golden oldie since sunrise. We had gambled and won in the outdoor writer's ongoing game of rolling the dice. My three hour drive northeast from the western suburbs of Milwaukee to Algoma meant a 1:30 a.m. departure.



Lake Michigan and Lake Superior harbors from Kenosha to Superior offer fishing charter services that make anglers young and old smile. This happy fisherman found good fishing with Captain Zach Burgess and Why Knot Charters in Kewaunee County. Contact them at 920-559-7573 or [www.whyknotcharters.com](http://www.whyknotcharters.com). (Burgess)



The 2011 winner of the Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby was Thomas Valacak with this 28.16 pound king salmon. (Photo courtesy of [www.kdsalmon.com](http://www.kdsalmon.com).)

Although weather conditions were tame enough Tuesday for Naze's small boat, recent prevailing winds had taken fish far out from the harbor and pushed the thermocline where we would find our targets at depths of 200 to 300 feet. Despite his experience, confidence, and proven track record, Naze couldn't guarantee finding those fish.

"You can come now or next week," Naze had said Monday night. "Next week we might not be able to get on the lake at all depending on conditions. Right now it's real calm but the fish are out there far and deep. We're dealing with five days of north, northeast winds and that brings in the warm surface water between 65 and 70 degrees and starts stacking it up near shore, which pushes the thermocline down and out away from shore. The fish like that cold water between 45 and 55 degrees."

Just after 4:30 the next

morning in the predawn black, we were bouncing over the wakes made by much larger boats in route to our hunting grounds. To the south Mars hung with a full moon. To the east, changing shades of grays, purples, and oranges told us another brilliant Lake Michigan sunrise would soon arrive. And the running lights of a comfortably spread 30 or 40 boats verified that Kewaunee County has a certain reputation among those who chase the trout and salmon of Lake Michigan.

"I think rainbows and kings are the Big Two," Naze said as he began setting the flies and spoons on downriggers that would be taken to our target depth on 10-pound weights, which release with a strike. According to DNR creel census and the actual charter captain's reports, Kewaunee County leads the entire state in catches of chinook, rainbow, and lake trout. We just experiment until we find

the speed that the fish want. We adjust until we find that sweet spot."

It didn't take long, despite his small boat and the narrow swath cut on this huge water without the use of planer boards. With five dandies on ice three hours later, our bonus king gave us one final thrill. When the line counter reached 731 feet, the fish began to give a little. Twenty minutes later, the 20-pound plus chinook finally gave up the ghost.


"This fishery is such a blessing," Naze said. "Once you know what you're doing and watch the weather you can come out here in any size boat and expect to catch fish. If you have a boat but not the experience, go out with a charter boat first. It's well worth the money to pick the crews' brains and learn the subtle secrets."

According to Jon Jarosh, Director of Communications for the Door County Visitors Bureau, the abundance of charter boats makes it easy for anglers to get to the spots where big fish are being caught. For those pulling their own boat, there are also ample launches and ramps throughout Door County to accommodate them, a claim that can be made by Kewaunee and all Wisconsin counties on the Great Lakes welcoming anglers and their families as a vital part of the tourism industry.

"In July and August, salmon is probably our most popular species to fish for here in Door County and the annual Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby attracts a lot of fishermen during that tournament's 9-day run in 2011 from July 23rd to July 31st," Jarosh said. "Last year a 28.16 pound salmon won the top prize, but they've had 40-plus pound fish win it in the past."

The tournament offers

a first place prize of \$10,000 in cash. \$40,000 in cash and prizes are also awarded. But more than anything else, people come to Wisconsin's Great Lakes for the fishing.

"You hear of the giant Kings of Alaska but those trips are rare," Naze said. "This is world class Chinook fishing and it's right here. I fished out of British Columbia and an 18 pound king was the big fish. They get bigger fish than that out here every year, every month, every week, every day. Fishing the Great Lakes, both Michigan and Superior, is awesome.....just awesome." 

For more information on the Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby, connect with [www.kdsalmon.com](http://www.kdsalmon.com). For Door County charter boat, launch, or visitor information call 1.800.527.3529 or connect at [www.DoorCounty.com](http://www.DoorCounty.com) or [info@doorcounty.com](mailto:info@doorcounty.com). Anglers interested in fishing Lake Michigan or Lake Superior can contact a local tackle shop, Google online, or call the number of the local chamber of commerce in the port of your choice. Included is the southeast Lake Michigan fishing hotline at 414.382.7920, the Kewaunee County hotline at 1.800.626.3090 (or 920.487.3090), and the Door County hotline at 920.743.7046.

*Editor Note: Ellis fishes the Great Lakes with local experts annually. This column combines a Kewaunee County trip several years ago with updated 2011 photos, interviews and information for the reader.*

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