

Salmon Watching Grows

"Salmon watching" — an increasingly popular fall spectator sport — can be best enjoyed in the northwest lower peninsula where three state-operated harvest weirs are located, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

Thousands of coho and chinook provide a spectacular sight to weir visitors as the fish, migrating upstream to spawn and die, are corralled into holding ponds.

Auto Club points out that a trip to the weirs, near Honor and Manistee, can be easily combined with a fall color tour since mid-October to

early November is usually when the facilities are in peak operation.

The weirs, run by the State Department of Natural Resources, are essential for insuring the future of coho and chinook in the Great Lakes. Without them, these Pacific transplant salmon could not breed in large enough numbers to meet the demand of Michigan fishermen.

In addition to watching the salmon surge upstream, weir visitors can observe the egg-taking process which guarantees an adequate level of coho and chinook reproduction.

Here are the sights that await visitors at the three weirs:

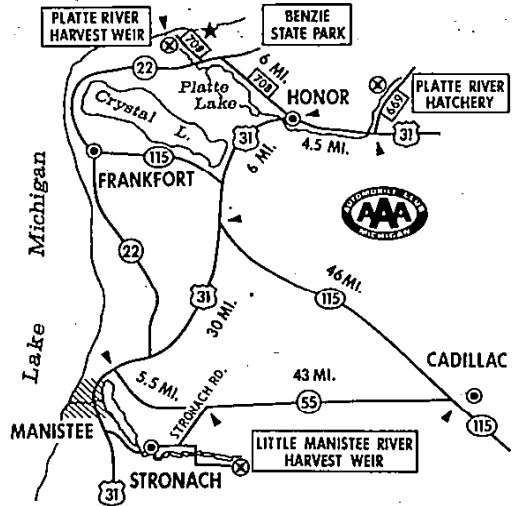
• **Platte River Hatchery** — Mostly coho swim upstream in the Platte and at times 20,000 of them, so thick they swim in layers, jam this facility.

• **Platte River Harvest Weir** — After the hatchery obtains its quota of salmon, this weir opens up its holding ponds and corrals the remainder for commercial sale.

• **Little Manistee River Weir** — This facility primarily is geared toward harvesting chinook. Visitors can


see these bigger-sized fish — some weighing upwards to 40 pounds — swimming into holding ponds and then stripped for egg and sperm.

The hatchery is open to visitors the year round from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. The two other weirs, used only during the salmon runs, open at varying times depending on volumes of fish on hand. Since runs are unpredictable, all three weirs at times open on weekends. The DNR advises a check with its Cadillac district office before planning a salmon watching trip.



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