

ALASKA'S WILD RIVER GUIDES *2018 Season Report*



July 10th - July 15th, 2018

Kukaktim River Fly-Fishing Expedition



**50 wild miles of
Rainbow, Char,
Sockeye, Kings &
Wildlife.**

**From the log of July
10th, 2017**

We departed off
Shannon's pond at
12pm with a lighter
then usual load. Dick

spotted two Moose one drainage up from our destination. We traveled fast with a group of four people total in two rafts. The middle fork lends itself to small groups due to its intimate size and typically shallow headwaters. We generally need to drag our rafts over the rocks to get through the first couple miles, but it was a high water year and we were able to float over everything comfortably. We pushed out of the headwater lake and into the start of the river and were met by the first group of spawning Sockeye. We began fishing as we worked our way down from the lake. The

water was gin clear but the rainbows stayed camouflaged into the brush with their leopard patterns. We fished fast and covered ground but moved some nice fish. In the upper 5 miles we hooked rainbows up to 19" throwing streamer patterns. The post spawn fish seemed to be a little spread out. We hit the gravel bar early and had camp set up just after 5:30pm. It was a chilly night with light rain that set the tone for the week to come. Generally this is one of the sunniest weeks of the year but colder temperatures stayed with us for most of the week. We fished from camp and were able to entice a few eager Grayling to eat our streamers. Year after year, we are annually impressed with the size of the Grayling on the Middle Fork. As an indicator species, they show the true health of this wild fishery. We bulked up on a pasta dinner and found the warmth of our sleeping bags early in the evening.



From the log of July 11th, 2017

We awoke to a cold, rainy morning and a thick fog that we could hardly see 100 yards in. From our small gravel bar in the middle of the Togiak national wildlife refuge, we began our first full day of fishing. The big rainbows in the upper river were spaced out a bit but you every 1/4 mile or so delivered a large fish. Ilan pulled a nice Jack King Salmon out of a small slough. Wolf tracks and Bear tracks were present around the Slough and strings of migrating Sockeye slithered up the shallows. Dick was throwing his streamer into woody debris and hooked into a 28" Dolly Varden Char! The big male fish generally come into the river first and that provides an opportunity for fishing to true trophies in the early part of the season. The Middle Fork has no shortage of quality rainbows and Ilan caught three fish in the 18-22" range in the afternoon alone. Dick also got on the board





with a nice 22” rainbow. Wolf prints littered nearly every bar we stepped on. The Wolves are particularly illusive in our part of Southwest Alaska but occasionally we will get the opportunity to see these incredible animals. Signs of young bears also were present but most of the bears were likely still up in the mountains eating berries before the Salmon migration was in full swing. The morning wind and fog died down and the sun came out just as we reached our camp at the confluence of the Kukatlim Fork and True Middle Fork of the Goodnews river. As we prepared dinner, Ilan fished the seam at the confluence and caught several nice Arctic Char, a nice Dolly Varden and a 24” Rainbow! John put on a little King Salmon casting demo and hooked a 18lb fish we were able to observe before releasing it. We enjoyed fresh fish tacos and fished late into the evening with the strong sun.

From the log of July 12th, 2017

The morning was a chilly 38 degrees and most of us were bulked up on our layers to stay warm. As soon as we started drifting down, we caught several nice Char right off the bat. Not far down the river, Pete and Ilan got a nice view of a young Brown Bear who was working his way up the river looking for early sockeye. A biting wind kicked up in the late morning and stayed with us for the remainder of the day. Ilan caught some nice Grayling in the morning. Both boats got into a pod of Dolly Varden in the 23-26” range. Dick and Ilan both landed true trophy fish out of this group of fish. At first glance, we thought the fish were Sockeye because they were so large but after further investigation we found them to be REALLY BIG char! We have released many salmon that were smaller than those Char. We stayed for 30 minutes to fish the pod and caught big fish on





both streamers and beads. We stopped for lunch and observed some nice pods of Sockeye pushing up. When we got back on the river we turned our sights back onto

rainbows and Dick caught a 22" fat RBT that put up an impressive fight. In the late afternoon, Pete observed a Raven take an Arctic Tern chick from its nest. While it was a sad sight to see, it reminded us that we were still in a wild world where survival of the fittest is a guiding principle of life. We made camp and enjoyed riverside pizza and played around targeting Sockeye that were pushing up our camp bar. We saw several Harriers flying around camp looking for small rodents to prey on.

From the log of July 13th, 2017

Friday the 13th... Superstitious anglers may think that we were in for a tough day based on the date alone. There may be something to that superstition because heavy wind and rain stayed with us nearly the entire day until the early evening. Despite superstition, Ilan caught a rainbow over 20" in the morning. It was sushi night and we were in need of a fish for dinner and we all had fresh sockeye on our minds. While the rest of the group gorged on lunch, Pete grabbed a rod, walked over to the bank where he spotted a group of pushing fish, and cast. As he set the hook, the water erupted as the bright fish cartwheeled through the air. He landed the fish with the help of Dick as his net man. He said a short thank you to the fish before humanely putting it down. Dick fished





hard in the afternoon and caught a fat rainbow and a large Chum Salmon. The Char fishing was really

heating up in the late afternoon and many fish were boated including one that Ilan landed around 27". The King Salmon runs seemed to be a little late and we were not seeing strong numbers of fish yet. We enjoyed fresh Sockeye sushi for the first time in the season for dinner. The fishing at camp was noteworthy to say the least. While Dick

enjoyed the comfort of the wing shelter, Ilan couldn't stop fishing. He landed over a dozen fish just from the camp bar while we were getting dinner going. We retired to our tents with sore arms and full bellies dreaming of what the next day might bring.



From the log of July 14th, 2017

Seeing that it was our last full day on the river, we tried to get a bit of an early start on breaking camp and getting moving. We

fueled up with breakfast and hit the river. The Chum fishing was hot from the start of the day and Dick landed lots of very nice fish, the largest of which was 15lbs. The bug life that started out the week had remained with us despite the colder temperatures we had seen. Large Caddis (Size 10) and a variety of lime green stoneflies we haven't seen outside of SW Alaska moved through the airspace. We had done a bit of fishing for King salmon throughout the week and spent a considerable amount of time targeting them on this final day. Dick caught several large jacks and Ilan put a fish estimated at 25lbs in the net after a 10 minute fight. We passed through the location where the fish counting weir would traditionally be set up.





We spoke to the weir employees and they relayed that the water came up too fast this year and they were not able to get the weir in place in time. The fishing below the weir was absolutely phenomenal for Chum salmon and we fished a side channel until our arms were sore. The avian life was active throughout the day. We spotted Tundra Swans, Bald Eagles and Sandhill Cranes during our day on

the river. Dick caught our first Pink Salmon of the season and a nice Rainbow over 20” in the lower river. Pete began to prepare his famous salmon curry while Ilan waded down bar in search of more fish. Dick sat in the wing with a glass of wine in hand, content with a great day of fishing. The sun had emerged and we had a beautiful evening at a nice camp we had pioneered that afternoon. Ilan caught a half dozen or more bright Chum Salmon down bar and practically had to be dragged off the river to come eat some dinner. It was a spectacular day of fishing and a great final full day.



From the log of July 15th, 2017

The sunshine we had gotten the night before stuck with us and we awoke to another beautiful day. This is the type of weather we wish for when its flyout day. We met Rick and Mike in the Cessna 185 and 206 and loaded up our gear into the aircrafts. The flight back to Dillingham was absolutely beautiful and ideal for snapping some great photographs of the wild landscape we had just spent the last 5 nights in. Another great week on the river with a good crew on the intimate Middle Fork of the Goodnews River!

