

I found Roger in Toronto awaiting a flight to UK. His bike is with a shipping agent about to follow him over the Atlantic. His plan is to spend the winter in the UK and get some work prior to hitting the road again in summer to ride and fish around Europe. He assures me he has been able to stay safely upright – which can't be said by yours truly. I've been privileged to get another chapter in his journey log. Roger clarifies this is Part 2 (still up in Alaska continuing on from his first part). Part 3 would probably be returning to BC, and part 4 could be the east coast. All this before we start on his European tour. I'll assemble this into a single document for our 'Places' blog in due course.

More of Roger's Travels – Part 2

Roger

If memory serves me correctly, I was fishing for King Salmon at Kasilof on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska at the time of my last report. Shortly after my report, the rivers in the Kenai peninsula were closed for King salmon. Unfortunately, I hadn't managed to catch one although I did have a definite grab. The technique I was using was swinging a fly with a Spey rod. Swinging is a lot of fun but is not always the most productive way to catch anadromous fish like Salmon and Steelhead. I only saw one person hook a King Salmon while swinging and heard reports of 2 fish that were caught with this method in the 2 weeks I was there. Most of the King Salmon caught while I was there, were caught by people lining for Sockeye salmon. The technique of lining (or flossing) involves casting a leader, with or without a weighted fly (sometimes just a weighted hook) upstream, letting it swing down and sharply flicking it out of the water. The idea is to get the leader to pass through the mouth of a fish (which you may or may not be able to see) and hook the fish on the outside of the mouth. In the case of Sockeye salmon it is probably fair enough because Sockeye do not respond to flies or lures (or even bait) once they enter a river to spawn. King salmon on the other hand do so these methods can be used to catch them.

After the King Salmon closure I decided to head north to the Denali area. The predominant fish in this area are grayling and I had my first attempt at them in a stream at the western end of the Denali Highway near a place called Cantwell. Although there were no fish rising, I tied on dry fly and sure enough after a few casts I caught the first of a few grayling, only about 10 to 12 inches long but still fun to catch.





I then rode to the eastern end of the Denali Highway and went fishing in a stretch of river between the Tangle Lakes. As I was donning my waders I met a guy who had been fishing there for years and he took me to a spot on the river and told me to fish downstream from there. He also gave me a weighted nymph which he said had been working well. I caught 20 grayling in around an hour. Again they were only 10 to 12 inches but were a lot of fun to catch. The technique I was using was swinging the nymph with a micro skagit line from OPST. The grayling were really thick and you could stand in the same spot for around 6 casts and catch a fish with every cast. If you didn't catch one on a cast you just took a couple of steps downstream and repeated the process.



My next stop was a place called Valdez near Prince William Sound which was the site of the infamous Exxon Valdez disaster in 1989 when an oil tanker ran aground and spilled 10.8 million gallons of oil into the sound. Luckily the area has mostly recovered. Across the harbour from Valdez, there is a hatchery which raises pink and silver salmon and releases them in an adjacent river. The salmon return to this river to spawn which in the case of Pink Salmon is every 2nd year, 2022 being a return year. The salmon return in numbers great enough to support a local fishing industry and there can be up to 100 purse seine boats fishing in the harbour when they are around. It is also a bonanza for the local seal and sea lion population and for recreational anglers who line the rock wall adjacent to the hatchery. I had heard that the fish were only 3 to 4 pounds so I only took a 6# down to fish to them. I realised my mistake when I hooked my first fish. I played it for 20 minutes and had it to the leader 5 times before it got off. I did manage to land the next one but the following day I brought an 8# which handled them a lot better. Most of the recreational anglers use lures, sometimes with a jaggging motion and were catching a lot more than I did on a fly but I still had fun.

After Valdez I returned to British Columbia to have another crack at Steelhead which I might cover in a subsequent report