

OFFC Alaska Fishing Trips – 2015

Hosted by Dick Lange

I am planning on floating possibly four rivers this year. I have captured a summary description of the rivers and their fishing opportunities by different books and articles that I have found that adequately describe the rivers. I am doing this so that you have the opportunity to learn more about the rivers, and determine if you want to fish that river. I have floated all of these rivers, and have tried to set up trips that I feel will give you the best fishing opportunities. Last year, we floated the Arolik and the Kwethluk. The previous years we have floated the Alagnak and the Kanektok. I feel all four rivers are some of the very best Alaska has to offer. I have tried to set them up for specific fishing:

Arolik – for their huge grayling abundant rainbows, and it's at the peak of the Kings run.

Alagnak – for its big rainbows and lake trout.

Kanektok – for its beauty, great rainbow fishing, and excellent silver fishing.

Kwethluk – for its great rainbow and silver fishing.

After you read the articles on the rivers, think about the type of fishing that you would like to do in Alaska, and then pick a river and see if you can float those dates offered. As in the past, you have to be a member of the Overlake Fly Fishing Club, which is easy to join, and its membership fee is reasonable, and if you do not live in the area, you can become an associate member, at a much reduced price. My intent is for you to join one of the best, most active and friendliest clubs in Seattle.

Alaska Fishing by Limeres and Pederson - *The Arolik River*

The following paragraphs were taken from Rene Limeres and Gunnar Pederson's book, Alaska Fishing, and Karen Jettmar's book, The Alaska River Guide. These two books are a wealth of knowledge, since they both hold two to three page articles on many of Alaska's rivers. Another excellent book is Dan Heiner's Alaska's Wild Rivers. It really describes how to fly fish Alaska, and has a great section on recommended fly patterns, and how to fish them.

The Arolik receives just a fraction of the attention lavished on the more glamorous streams surrounding it, the Kanektok and Goodnews. Shorter than its neighbors, the Arolik flows north and west for about 45 miles from headwaters above the Goodnews, with two main forks and numerous smaller tributaries. It braids heavily and splits into separate mounts before emptying into Kuskokwim Bay about five miles south of the village of Quinhagak.

With abundant rainbows, char, grayling and salmon, fishing on the Arolik is every bit as good as that on the Kanektok and Goodnews; in fact, the trout fishing is even better because the river doesn't get hit as hard as the other two. Arolik Lake is noted for having some of the better lake trout fishing in the region. The catch is that the Arolik is not a cakewalk river float like the others. The upper river is rocky and shallow in spots, especially below the lake, and during low water times, floating may be difficult, if not impossible. You can float early in the season and take your chances, using a lightly equipped raft, inflatable, canoe or kayak. Or you can try to put in by wheel plane at an old mining strip on Snow Gulch, about ten miles below the junction of the east and south forks and skip those shallow stretches altogether.

Alaska Fishing by Limeres and Pederson - *The Kanektok*

The Kanektok is one of several, sparkling blue tundra rivers that drain the fringe of mountains in the state's extreme southwest corner. Since the early 1980's, it has enjoyed worldwide notoriety for its exquisite stream fishing. Nearly perfect conditions and an abundance and variety of species – rainbow trout, sea-run char, grayling, and king, red, and silver salmon – make it one of Alaska's finest rivers for float-fishing.

The river rambles for 90 miles from mountain sources at Kagati Lake to the flat coastal plain and silty waters of Kuskokwim Bay. Gravel bottomed, moderately swift (three to four miles per hour), with lots of shallow braids and pools containing amazing fish populations, and the Kanektok is a fly fisher's dream. (At one time, it had some of the highest concentrations of catchable-size rainbow trout of any river studied by the US Fish and Wildlife Service).

The best way to fish it is from a raft, floating down from Kagati Lake. You won't meet any serious rapids, just fast water (occasional Class 1 stretches). The only hazards to speak of are the abundant sweepers, which can be dangerous in the numerous switchbacks and fast current. On the upper river, you'll find great scenic views and good grayling and char fishing, while the best rainbow trout habitat seems to be the heavily braided middle and lower sections (from Klak Creek down) as the river emerges from the mountains. The lower 10 miles of river is the preferred location for intercepting the Kanektok's abundant runs of sea-bright silver and king salmon. (some of the state's largest in average size) and sea run char.

One of the prettiest rivers you'll ever see, the Kanektok is blessed with some truly amazing fishing. While the rainbows aren't the giants you will find in some of the big lake and river systems further east, they're abundant and very pretty, with deep crimson stripes and big, black spots (the leopard rainbow much hyped in the tourist literature). This river also has some of the best, late summer sea run char fishing south of the Kotzebue, with lots of feisty, bright fish in the three to six pound range, and an occasional eight pounder. (The best time to catch them is from late July on.) You can stay at an outpost tent camp, if you're not into rafting, and several area lodges maintain spike camps on the middle and lower sections of the river, using jet boats for accessing the better holes. Ask anyone who has fished Alaska about the Kanektok, and you'll get a unanimous appraisal for its rant amount the state's top fishing waters.

Guide's Tip: The Kanektok is one of the rivers where the Alaska "deer hair mouse" earned it notorious reputation. In certain years, they can be very effective, so bring some along. Fish them under cut banks and in shallows for explosive surface strikes from rainbow trout to char.

Papa Bear Adventures - *The Kwethluk River*

The float begins with a short portage (approximately 150 yards) from Boundary Lake over to the Kwethluk River. From there the River flows west and splits the Great Ridge and Green Stone Ridge. The upper portion of the river provides spectacular scenery and is the habitat for Dolly Varden and Grayling. The best fishing starts about 25 miles into the float at the confluence of the Kwethluk River and Crooked Creek. Fish remains good all the way to the pickup point. The river is small and very fly-fishing friendly, offering extensive camping and fishing opportunities.

The fishing begins each year in late June with the King Salmon run and culminates each year in mid-September with the Rainbow fishing reaching its peak and the end of the Silver Salmon run. In addition to Rainbow and Salmon fishing, the Kwethluk Adventure also offers great Dolly Varden and Grayling fishing.

Remote and rarely traveled, the Kwethluk provides an alternative to its more renowned neighbors. For the wilderness diehard who wants to catch some fish, this is one of the last streams to provide isolation

and rainbow trout. It takes about a week to float down to the take-out point, and you may not see another person.

The float trip begins on a small tundra lake located at the edge of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, known appropriately enough as Boundary Lake. There is a short portage (50 yards) from the lake to the river. The flat glacial plain that encompasses the river makes for good hiking, but make sure you have your bug dope accessible when you land.

The upper river is tiny, and at low water will require some dragging. This is a riffle-and-pool section, but holds nothing other than a few small grayling. The best thing to do is keep the rods in the cases and enjoy the float. There is a lot of wildlife in the edge of the mountains, particularly caribou and bear. You may also be lucky enough to spot a wolf.

Unlike many rivers in western Alaska, the Kwethluk does not go through a canyon section as it descends from the mountains. As a consequence, there are no portages or rapids to contend with. There is some spruce, but it is primarily open country, making it a trouble-free float.

The good rainbow fishing begins above Elbow Mountain and continues on down to Three Step Mountain. Look for fish in cover and behind the spawning salmon. Most of the fishing takes place in the main stem of the river, rather than the braids and backwaters common on some streams. John McDonald, of Kuskokwim River Adventures, likes sculpin patterns and ginger bunny flies with a little red or green flash in the tail.

The Kwethluk gets a good run of silvers, but they are not always easy to find. Look for them in deeper holes and at creek mouths.

Flyfishers Guide to Alaska, Scott Haugen - *The Kwethluk River*

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So here is the deal....

Here are the dates that I have selected and offering to club members. If you are interested, please let me know ASAP. You are probably wondering how much a trip will cost. Before I estimate the cost,

let me say that the biggest part of the cost is the transportation method I use to get us into and back from the river. In some cases, it's a float plane In and Out, others it's a float plane In and a 24 foot power boat ride Out. Others it's a float plane In and a car/trailer shuttle back Out to the originating airport. I will make this promise to you – I will do my best to keep the cost down to what I expect the cost to come in as, and in all cases, it will not exceed the cost that I estimate. I will pay my own way, and I will pay for any cost that exceeds what I estimate. I have one condition for you to follow. Weight is how the float planes are billed, so I need to make sure I keep the weight costs down; that means I need everyone to bring the bare essentials in the way of clothes and equipment. I supply the tents, you need to supply your air mattress and sleeping bag. I ask everyone to bring 70 pounds of clothes, sleeping bag and equipment. Last year, we had too much weight for two float planes and had to add a third plane to get us into the lake. That added \$700 to the overall cost of the trip.

Here are the rivers and dates I would like to float in 2015:

Alagnak	June 7-14		\$1600
Arolik	June 19-28		\$1600, not to exceed \$2000
Arolik	June 27 – July 5		\$1600, not to exceed \$2000
Kanecktok	July 31- Aug 11	Sockeye, Chums, Pinks, Silvers	\$1800
Kwethluk	Aug 14-25		\$1600, not to exceed \$2000
Kwethluk	Aug 21-31 or add 2 more days ie to Sep 2		\$1600, not to exceed \$2000
Kanecktok	Sep 4-14 or add 2 more days ie to Sep 16		\$1800
Kanecktok	Sep 18-28 or add 2 more days ie to Sept 30		\$1800

If you want to talk with other members of our club who have been on these trips, here is a partial list of people who have joined us floating these rivers...

Bruce Clark	
Tom Eng	Rex Maurer
Jonathan Harkness	Ed Miller
Ed Kane	Dave Nielson
Bob Kulwin	Tim Opitz
Joe Kristof	Ron Romig
Howard Levens	Chas Wade

If you would like to join us this year, or just want more information, please contact me at (425) 481-3063

Many Thanks.....

Dick Lange