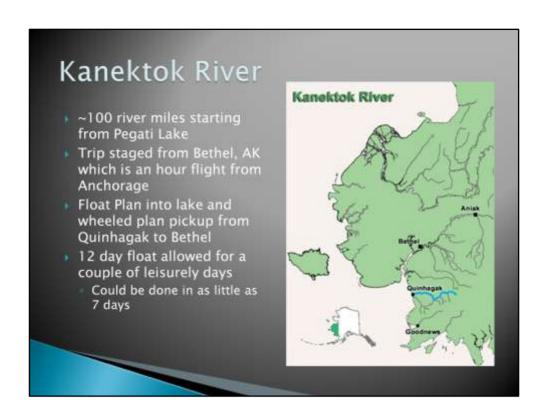


I'm going to talk about my float trip last year to the Kanektok River in Alaska. The interesting thing about this trip was our approach. We wanted to get an experience which is significantly different from an outfitter organized trip. The kind of trip that would appeal to a Do It Yourselfer.



The Kanektok River is located in western Alaska. We staged out of Bethel, although there are other location that would also work. The float is about ~100 miles long, starting with a float plane trip, and ending with a pickup with a wheeled plane. We did the trip in 12 days, so most days were leisurely, and were able to stay in a couple of spots for 2 nights. Although, we did have a couple of days of hard rowing because river miles don't equal line of site miles.

#### River Description

- Upper River
  - Scenic small river thru rolling hills, boulders
- Middle Section
  - Lots of braids, a few sweepers
- Lower Section
  - Slow Wide water
- Very Remote
  - Didn't anyone else for the first 6 days

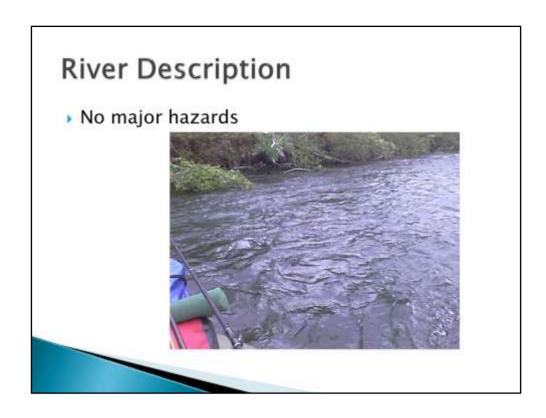


Upper River

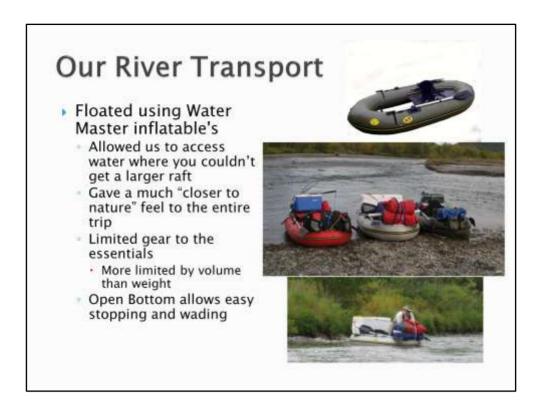


Lower River

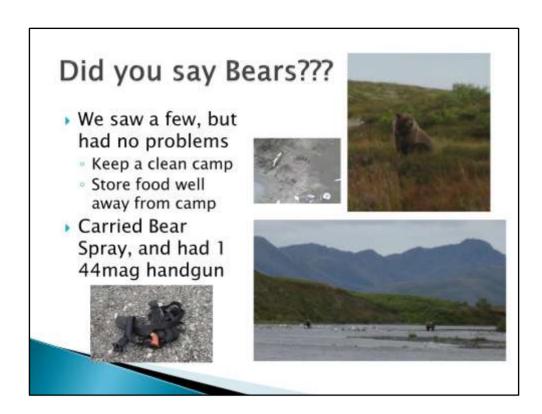
The upper river is more like a mountain river. It's clear and cold coming out of the lake. There are boulder fields and gravely bottoms. The middle section of the river start to have lots of channel braids that were great places for trying to get a rainbow on a mouse. The lower river is a wide twisting flow with less interesting structure. As you get into the lower river, the river become accessable from below by boat, so that's where you will start seeing people. We didn't see anyone for the first 6 days.



The river is an easy float. One of our party had no experience rowing on a river (although lots of experience rowing pontoon boats on lakes). He was able to navigate with no problem, and quickly got the hang of finding the right current seam to get the most speed without hitting the trees.



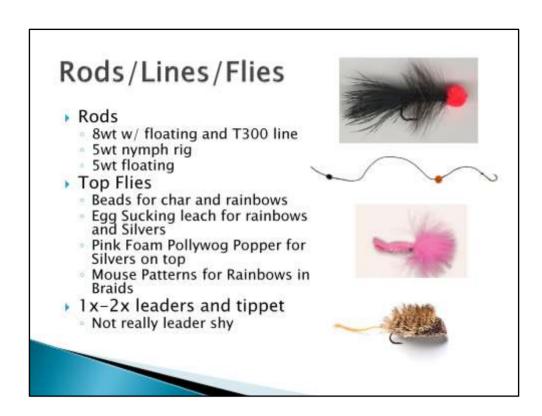
We did the trip in Watermaster inflatable rafts. The trip organizer, Jim had two rafts, and was able to borrow another for us. This was actually his second leg of two back to back trips (26 day total). I loved the watermaster. It was easy to handle, and could carry a bunch of gear. Even loaded up, the rafts had no problem. That is a full size dual marine ice chest on the back of the middle boat. We were able to go place a bigger raft couldn't have accessed. The open floor was great for this type of trip. To stop, you could just stand up. Being low to the water, and small, you really got the feel of being close to the river.



Yep, we saw a few bears and lots of tracks and sign. We didn't have any problems, although when we came around a corner and came along the two juveniles fishing, they seemed to be hesitant to leave the river. We slowly worked to the far bank, and came closer. When we did the went to the bank and watched us go by. All of the other bears we saw took off as soon as they saw us. One guy had a handgun, and the other two carried bear spray. The statistics say that you are safer with bear spray than a gun, but it didn't always feel that way



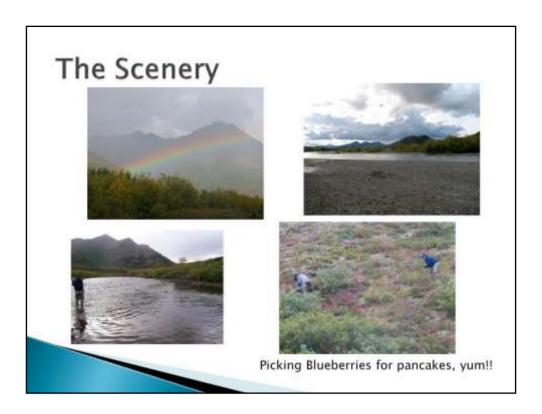
In the time we were there, we got silvers, rainbows, dolly Varden/Artic Char and Grayling. We actually did pick up one sockeye at the lake, but it was in a sorry state. The Char in this river were amaizing, kind of like sunfish of the north. You could catch 30-40 fish without moving your feet. And there were a few big ones. Our biggest was 27"



We were using 5 and 8 wt rods. 8's for silvers, and 5s for everything else. The top underwater flies were the egg sucking leach and beads. Whenever we saw a streach of slack water, we would pull out the pink wog and try to get silvers on the topwater. We generally had good success. And there is nothing like having a big rainbow come out from under a log to inhale you mouse!



Here you can see one of the mouse pattern we were using, and a couple of fish shots



As you would guess, the scenery was spectacular. We did take some time to pick some blueberries for breakfast

# Camping

- Lots of spots to camp
- Think Light
  - · Backpacking equipment is best
    - · Tent, Sleeping bag (+5deg), Pad
- Bug Tent a must!
  - · Place to get out of the rain and bug
  - · Don't forget folding chairs





Because we were in little boats, our gear more closely resembled what you would find on a backpacking trip. We did each have a tent, so we could dry out our stuff, but kept the big items to a minimum. The coolers you see were actually for dry storage rather than for keeping things cold. The bug tent was our hang out area to avoid the bugs and the rain.



In keeping with the minimalist theme, we did a mix of fresh fish and freeze dried meals. I hadn't had any freeze dried food for about 20 years, and I must say they have come along way. The lasagna was actually quite good! Breakfast was pancakes or oatmeal, and sandwiches for lunch. We went for food that would have easy prep and clean up to maximize fishing time!

#### Weather

- In a word, WET
  - · Be prepared for daily rain.
- Pack to keep wet and dry items separate
  - Inside dry bag keep sleeping bag/pad in separate plastic bag, compactor bags work best



We had rain every day, including a couple of days where it rained continuously morning to night. Under these condition it's hard to not have everything get wet. Careful packing is important to keep those thing that you really want to keep dry (like a sleeping bag) from those thing that will be wet (like a rain fly). From when the hi-laker guy was here giving a talk, I got the tip to use trash compactor bags instead of regular garbage bags, because they are thicker and will stand up better.

#### Equipment

- Raft, Oars, Life vest, Tie off rope
- Tent, Sleeping bag, Sleeping pad, Pillow (Dry bags)
- Bug Tent
- Cook Kit, Backpacking Gas Stove

Don't forget bug net

- Folding table, chair
- Waders/belt, Boots, Rain Jacket (2)
- Fleece, gloves, camp shoes
- Three fly rods 1 dry 5wt and 1 nymph rig 5wt, 8wt, Flies, Vest, Leader material,
- Floatant, Strike indicator
- Clothes NO COTTON-Pack sets of clothes
- Water filter, water bottle
- GPS with river miles programmed in

The equipment list is pretty much as you'd expect. One big point was that your clothes should include no cotton. At least, when it does get wet, you will still be able to stay warm, and it will dry in less than a month. Another good tip is to have a GPS with river miles programmed in. With all of the twists and turns in the lower river, our progress really slowed. If we would have known the river miles left, we could have made some different decisions about where we camped



An the bugs can be a problem. REI has a great bug head net. You can even eat with it on!

## **Getting There**

- Left SEA at 3:00pm, arrived in Bethel at 8:00pm local time
  - Start float next day
- Return after last float day
  - Depart Bethel 8:30pm, Arrive SEA 3:00am
- Make sure you have a good plan in Quinhagak for transport to Airport



Waiting room at Quinhaguhak Just enough log space for two

The flight arrangements from SEA are easy, but you will have to spend at least on night in Bethel.

#### The Costs

Airfare to Bethel

Drop-off/Pickup

Shipping Gear

Food

Night in Bethel

License

Great Place to use Frequent Flyer Miles

\$1000

\$350

\$150 \$100

\$80



Total ~\$1700

 Boat Rental can be found for \$35 per day or \$210 per week

Overall the cost of this trip is quite reasonable when compared to a full service outfitter. Even with boat rental, you are looking at about \$2000/person

### **Outfitters and Websites**

- Outfitters
  - Papa Bear Adventures
    - · http://www.pbadventures.com/
  - Tikchik Adventures
    - · http://tikchikadventures.com/
- Additional River Info
  - Dave Duncan & Sons
    - http://www.kanektokriver.com/

Heres a list of some spots for more info

