



Global fly fishing travelers usually evolve to an annual schedule of travel that includes their favorite destinations and spiced with other adventures they may visit one time, semi-annually, or occasionally. So it has become with John Landis, who's photos comprise this photo essay. John, including his upcoming trips already booked, will have visited jungle destinations such as the Amazon and Tsimane in Bolivia (scheduled for next year), New Zealand and Chile (rotating every other year), Belize, Seychelles, and other miscellaneous global fly fishing attractions like Costa Rica. Two destinations that are becoming part of John's annual itinerary are Africa and his favorite fly out lodge in our 50th state, Alaska Sportsman's Lodge, the subject of this photo essay. John (photo –



on right) returned this summer for his 6th trip. Accompanying him in the photo are Jim McDonald (left) and his son, Jamie (on his first Alaska trip), Terry Landis, Rob Pizzie (also on his first Alaska trip with John), and Mike Cirello.

The fishing program at Alaska Sportman's Lodge includes all the Alaska species: rainbows, lake trout, grayling, Artic Char, Dolly Varden, northern pike, and all five species of Pacific salmon. Daily flyouts, weather permitting, access whatever streams and rivers are fishing best for the desired particular species for that specific time of the summer. Waters accessed via fly outs vary from small, walk 'n wade streams to larger rivers. Timing is always a critical element of Alaska as the fishing changes dramatically from week to week and month to month as the different species of salmon make their runs.

Plus, the Kvichak River, one of Alaska's most productive rivers, is available in front of the lodge and its entire length can be accessed via jet boat.

Photos below: that's Rob and John (rainbow) with fish to be released. Watching the bears is an exciting activity that is part of the regular package when fishing in Katmai National Park where the wildlife is protected.



The series of photos below were captured during fly outs to two different rivers on different days. The float plane dropped the angler and guides (with lunches and drinking water) off and the rafts were then inflated. The rivers were floated using the rafts to get between productive riffles and pools, which were then waded. At the end of the day, the plane would return to a pre-determined place on the river to pick everyone up and return them to the lodge for drinks and dinner.





Right above is Rob with a small chum salmon. Below left, Rob displays a silver salmon with a pair of bear claw marks. Obviously, this fish escaped the bear's clutches to find Rob's fly.



It is the life cycle of the five species of Pacific Salmon (chinook, chum, coho, pink, and sockeye) that create a super-charged marine environment that attracts 1000's of fly fishers annually. Each summer, millions of salmon return to the place of their birth in Alaska's rivers and streams to spawn and then die. They come in waves, with the different species occupying different parts of the summer calendar. The act of spawning itself begins the process of enriching the fishery as billions of eggs are dropped, many of which become food for swimming predators like the rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, and a host of other species. After the spawn, the salmon die, but before that, they are fodder for the Brown and Grizzly Bears that rely on this run of fish to maintain their bulk. As the dying salmon bodies begin to decay and come apart, their flesh provides a rich diet for all the creatures in the eco system, including the flying, the aquatic, and the land based creatures. The next step in the life cycle occurs in the spring when the eggs begin to hatch, sending millions of baby salmon back to the ocean, and during the trip, becoming fresh feed for the waiting predators along their route.

Below: the sandy beaches become the final resting places for what is left of the salmon carcasses after the bears, birds, and other opportunity feeders have had their fill. The sockeye salmon, below in red spawning colors, enter the rivers bright silver and, after exposure to the fresh water, slowly turn to red.



Regarding returning to Alaska Sportsman's Lodge this summer for the sixth time, John Landis, a discriminating world wide traveler, had these comments about the overall operation: "The lodge, staff, and accommodations are first class at the Alaska Sportsman's Lodge. The same group of guides and pilots are there every year. You are treated as family. The food and wine are great; they have a chef and a pastry chef! The fishing program is flexible with daily flyouts. In bad weather, the river in front of the lodge can be fished for salmon and large Lake Illiama rainbows. Most flyouts are to the Katmai National Forrest with its abundance of Grizzly Bears and fish. It is common to see over 50 bears in a day with many hunting salmon closeby. Flyouts are to rivers and streams for wading, rafting, or jet boats. All 5 species of Salmon are present plus rainbow trout, lake trout, grayling, Arctic char, dolly varden, and northern pike. If I could only go on one fishing trip, it would be here. The owner takes care of all details to make the trip memorable."

Below, l to r: The main lodge; individual two person cabins; the “Spa” sign states that this is not really “roughing it.” Most Alaska lodges prepare a certain amount of salmon, either smoked or fresh frozen, for anglers to take home as part of the package. We rate the Alaska lodges “A”, “B”, and “C” for ambiance, fishing program, and overall services. The Alaska Sportsman’s Lodges rate a strong “A” – at right is an abandoned “D” lodge.



John submitted an amazing collection of bear photos, far too many for us to include in this photo essay. Below is a sampling.



Thanks to John Landis, at right in the photo with his guide holding a nice Alaska rainbow, for the collection of outstanding photos which made this photo essay possible. Capturing with a camera the reasons we are passionate about our fly fishing hobby is one way of expanding the overall enjoyment and challenge of the sport. John is becoming an excellent fly fishing photographer and we greatly appreciate his contributions to our newsletters.

Don Muelrath
Fly Fishing Adventures

