

September 23, 2008  
Don,

I suppose you could find a place on the planet better than the Elk River for Cutthroat Trout fishing but I don't think I'll spend much time trying to do so. Our trip north was what both my fishing buddy Joe Bankofier and I think was one of our best flyfishing trips.



The last time I was up in the Kootenays near Fernie BC was 3 years ago in early September when it rained for 8 straight days. My wife and I camped in several places with a small fifth wheel and our marriage survived it but barely. This trip we enjoyed incredible weather, not a drop in the week we were there and both our wives were thinking it was a great trip. There is hope, there is hope!



We fished it by ourselves for 3 days and found these most beautiful fish everywhere. What really capped off our trip was floating the river via your reservations for us with your Fernie outfitter. Jeff set us up with his partner, Spencer, the first day and with him the second. We used Hyde drift boats both days and floated 6 or 7 miles of river each. These guys know the river so well it is

spooky. "Put one in that seam in the foam Loren.... and Joe, you put one the other way just below that root wad" were the kind of instructions you'd get and really, almost always one of us would have a Cut up on the dry fly.

Gotta hand it to Jeff and his company. The second day we fished, he had either 5 or 8 drift boats parting for several places, mostly the Elk. As a comparison, earlier in that day I stopped in the two larger fly fishing operations in town and between them they had only one boat going out. There is a reason and you certainly represent a good outfitter in Jeff and Spencer.



Nymphs you say? Leave 'em home. This is just the most incredible dry fly fishery I have seen in 35 years of flyfishing, period. Caught them on caddis, beetles, hoppers and mayflies. After each fish the guide dries your fly in VFLAGRA, which is their name for a concoction of Mucilin and an alcohol which is



a liquid mixture in a small plastic cup. Comes out wet, dries instantly leaving only the Mucilin and off your are to cast.

Numbers? Don't want to get started keeping track, it'll be a waste of energy. Size? All fisheries have a scale or perspective on the size of the fish. Untold numbers of Cuthroats in the 10 to 14" range which in the current and on your size 4, 5 or 6 sytem will give a fine

battle before the net. We hooked a good number of fish in the 14" to 16" range and landed lots of them. The "hogs" as named by both Spencer and Jeff are the 17" to 19" and ? or so size and in this world are trophies as far as I am concerned. We each landed a number of these guys and won't forget it.

Joe used a size 4 system for the trip and these bigger fish were really a trip on it. I spent the second day using a bamboo rod that Walton Powell senior made for me in 1975. I haven't used it that much until the last couple of years and on this day on the Elk I landed more fish with it than all of the fish landed put together since I've had the rod. Of course the bamboo is a whole world slower than graphite but it worked so well on this trip I intend to use it a lot more in the future. Back to basics?

One of the days we didn't use guides I drove over a dirt road pass (Hartley Lake Pass) and down this little stream called Sulphur Creek and to where it flows into the Bull River only to realize I needed to have stopped somewhere and bought a Bull River Classified day tag to be legal. I was thinking of fishing the Bull anyway and after an Albertan elk guide pulled in to the turn around to visit and explain the fines for not having the right classified tag I unwaded and headed back over the pass. I did though stop in to a pull out and went down the bank to a pool on the Sulpur Creek and in about 15 casts landed 7 smaller cutthroats and left before the gendarmes showed up.

Also stopped into a little lake and fish were moving all over the place as well. While sitting there in the quiet two things happened. First, Sally said "Loren there is a pile of stuff over here full of berries, is it a bear you think?". Yup. Second, we had a Bull Elk bugle just up on the ridge behind us and it echoed for a number of seconds after. Won't forget it.

Enclosed are some photos. Feel free to use them if you'd like.

Loren Irving