



## REPORT: SILVERS ON THE SURFACE



“.....the Silver will follow the fly, swimming just below the surface of the water until it finally strikes. It's like a scene from a movie! A wake appears behind your fly, slowly closing on it until the fish takes it in a flash of jaws and teeth. The first time I saw it I was dumbfounded, and just watched the take without setting the hook! After I finally hooked one, it was off to the races. The fish were fresh from the sea, and it showed. They took off on long screaming runs and acrobatic jumps. It was like catching a wild steelhead on a dry fly.” Those were the thoughts of Josh Luft-Glidden upon returning from his first trip to fish the Goodnews River.

There are places where the water flows set up well for occasionally taking silver salmon (Coho) on the surface. However, regarding predictably taking good numbers of silvers on the surface, there may not be anything to rival the way the Goodnews River sets up with its massive runs of fish. For three weeks in late summer, this is the main attraction on the lower section of this amazingly productive Alaskan watershed.

The Silver Salmon is the top fly rod Pacific salmon for a number of reasons. In some watersheds, they are readily abundant with staggering runs of fresh fish each year. They will take a fly.....and in the lower section of the Goodnews River, they will readily take a fly off the surface. Their size (8 to 15+ pounds) is second only to the King Salmon who rarely eat the fly and are nowhere near as plentiful as the silver. And their fighting ability, with strong runs and jumps, is second to none. And, in the Goodnews River, as long as your timing is right, you'll catch far more silvers than any other species of salmon.

During the run on the Goodnews, each day thousands of fresh fish come in on the tide. There are three forks to the river. Each fork forms a decision point for the Silvers and causes them to mill around and wait for the proper triggers to send them up one of them. This provides outstanding opportunities to fish for them in the current seams, side sloughs, flats, creeks, and braids of tidewater. It is not unusual to see thousands of fish milling around. All of this assures the opportunity to cast a popper to fresh, chrome bright fish still covered with sea lice.



Maybe the best reason that they take the popper so readily is that they just don't have much fishing pressure. Due to special arrangements with the local tribe, the Goodnews River Lodge is the only permanent camp on the river system. With so few fishermen pursuing them, they don't get spooked easily. If a group of fish quits responding to the popper, it doesn't take much effort to find another gathering.

In conclusion, the surface action for Silvers on the Goodnews is unique due to the massive runs of fish coupled with the structure of the river and, most importantly, little fishing pressure. All of this assures casting to bright, fresh, responsive fish daily.

Josh went on to say about his trip, “It was exactly what I was looking for in an Alaska fly fishing experience. An abundant and diverse fishery, beautiful wildlife, and rustic yet

comfortable accommodations. I caught all five species of Pacific salmon, grayling, dolly varden, and rainbow trout (all 'bows were taken on a skated mouse).....I saw bears, moose, golden eagles, bald eagles, and ate wild blueberries and raspberries right off the bush. Even with such a wide variety of species to target, the main attraction was fishing for silvers on the surface.....It was like nothing I have ever experienced.”

Note: another trip report on the Goodnews River Lodge can be accessed through this link [http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_AKtrip.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_AKtrip.pdf)

**Don Muelrath**

**Fly Fishing Adventures**

**888-347-4896**

**[www.flyfishingadventures.org](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org)**

**(photo credits: Josh Luft-Glidden)**