



## Central Kenai Peninsula Fishing Report 7-15-2015



The heat and flames of the June Kenai Peninsula fire(s) have been contained and extinguished, and we are moving into the heat of the summer fishing season. The first run of sockeye salmon is wrapped up, and we are on the front end of the second run!

### **Kasilof River**

The Kasilof has also seen king runs shrink over the past few years, and the special management area utilized by ADF&G in an attempt to control sockeye escapement also can affect King salmon returns. It is important to time your fishing to the tides when going after kings on the Kasilof in July!

Lots of sockeye have been flooding the river, despite commercial nets and dipnets opening for extended range on the lower Kasilof River. Limits of 6 fish per person are very attainable. Once again, concentrate your efforts around the tide because the Kasilof is a very short river system, and fish shoot upstream very quickly!

### ***Middle & Lower Kenai***

On the middle (Skilak Lake to Bings Landing) and lower (Bings to Cook Inlet), fishing is heating up. Kings, sockeye and rainbows are all fishable right now on the lower sections of the river. Thus far, we have seen modest numbers of sockeye trickling into the lower Kenai. Limits have been tough, but a good fisherman in a good spot at the right time could put their limit on the bank with some work. In recent days the numbers are starting to climb and that first big surge of fish is just starting to hit the river, or may be here any day now! Historically, the big push is usually around 7/17, so only a few days! Look for gravel bars that slope gently and flip your fly into the running lane. Experiment with different leader lengths, sinker types, and flipping distances. Once you find the perfect combo stick with it. The sockeye are going to be working their way into the middle and Upper River in the very near future, so migrating upstream with them is not a bad idea for a savvy angler.

King salmon numbers are up this year from what they have been over the last couple of years. That sounds like great news, however keep in mind the last few years have been historic low runs, and the average size of the King salmon in the Kenai is much smaller than they have been in the past. Although ADF&G is likely to liberalize regulations, we strongly recommend you consider releasing any good-sized kings that you're lucky enough to tangle with. We need all the kings we can get spawning on gravel bars this fall! Standard techniques of back trolling Kwikfish and/or spin & glows is always a great bet. Fly anglers have a slim chance of catching

kings on the Kenai, but if you find the perfect spot to swing with a heavy sink tip close to shore or off the back of an island...it's possible. Just remember that in order to land a big King in heavy current a boat is a requirement in most scenarios. Keep a boat nearby if you want to keep your fly line! And again, let's all work to preserve and protect these one of a kind fish!

The trout in these two sections of the river are transitioning from the post spawn deep-water leech and sculpin feeding frenzy to the flesh bite from the early and impending sockeye rush. Although the sockeyes have not yet begun to run hard, the trout and char are anticipating this Kenai specific mid season hatch, and are beginning to bite both flesh and egg patterns well. Look for slower water channels breaking off of heavy current for the best chance of your next trophy.

### ***Upper Kenai***

On the Upper Kenai, as June turns into July, you have to remain flexible if you want to have success trout fishing. The supply of carcass and eggs from the first run salmon slaughter has slowed and high water from our June heat wave has flushed most of last year's left over flesh out of the system. We've also got the beginning of the second run sockeye starting to show, which can make for some shy rainbows and dollies.

This can be a tricky time of year for trout fishing. For the best success, try bead head nymphs, small washed out beads, or micro flesh. Try adding a bit of sparkle for that extra something to get their attention and stay away from areas that are full of holding sockeye.

Sockeye fishing has been unpredictable on the upper river in general, with the confluence area holding the most fish. As we get later in the month, we should start to see a steady stream of fresh fish moving in. Keep in mind that the limit of sockeye returned to 3 per person, 6 in possession. This covers the entire Upper River, including the sanctuary area and the Russian River.

On the Russian River, the water has been low due to lack of rain but the trout are still out there. Expect them to be in the riffles and deeper runs, and try micro flesh or buggy emerger type flies fished under a small indicator. The best time to be there is early and late in day when salmon anglers have thinned out. Remember that single beads fished above a bare hook are illegal in the Russian through August 20th.

### **Summary**

It's a great time to be on the Kenai Peninsula- and lots of your friends, family and neighbors think so too- so be mindful of the crowds. Dipnetting is open on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, and fishing is likely to just get better and better heading up the river as we move forward. Whether fishing for fun or to fill your freezer, please go the extra mile this year to respect the resource and your fellow angler(s)! Best wishes for tight lines!

*Fishing report compiled by Brendyn Shiflea of Pretty Fly For a White Guy with in river action reports and pictures submitted by guides Lee Keuper of Alaska's Angling Addiction, Mark Wackler of Fishology*

Alaska, and Brian Kaferstein of Keen Eye Anglers. All are current or past board members of the Kenai Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

