

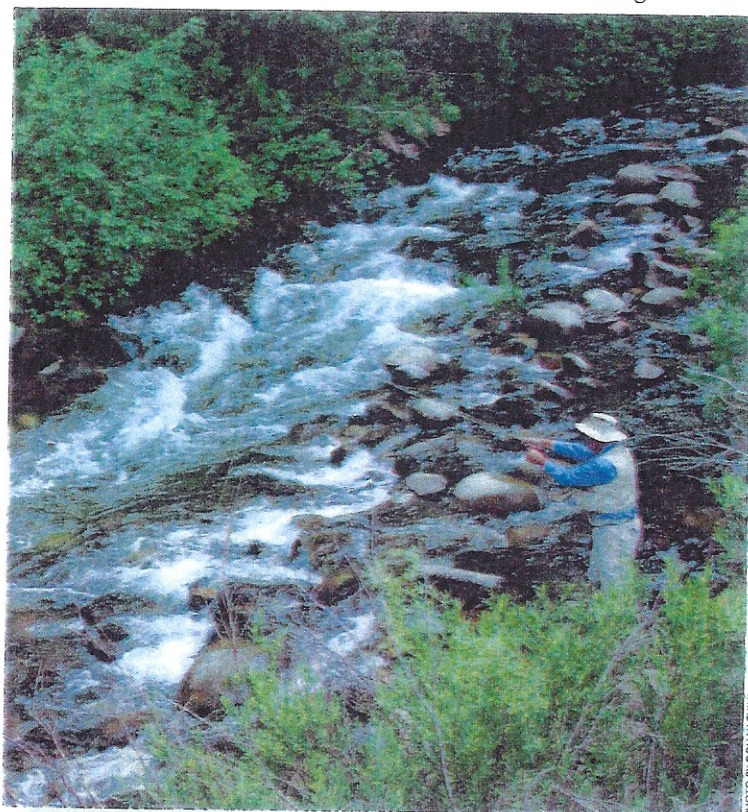
the confluence of Caples Creek, which also offers excellent prospects for wild fish. An unstocked creek, Caples is the outflow of Caples Lake and enjoys cool and relatively consistent flows all summer. If you fish it, make sure you pass up the lower mile of the creek, which receives a fair amount of angling pressure. But if you persevere, and you are a small stream and small wild trout fanatic like me, you will be a happy camper.

In most years the best time to fish these waters is from Memorial Day through July. After that, the water in the Silver Fork drops very low; when that happens, plan on fishing at sunup or at dusk, or wait until the temperatures cool in October and early November. The stream is open to angling year-round, but the road is not plowed in the winter, making access typically problematic after Thanksgiving.

Four and 5-weight rods are perfect for most of the summer, and 2- and 3-weights can be a lot of fun to fish in October. For nymphing, use a 9-foot leader and two flies below a bit of weight. This is stonefly water, so a heavy stonefly pattern with a small, impressionistic dropper fly such as a bead-head Pheasant Tail is usually effective. As the summer wears on, a caddisfly pupa or larva pattern may work better than a stonefly nymph. Because hatchery fish abound, attractor dry flies also work most of the time. Adams variations and versions of the Elk Hair Caddis always work. If you happen to get there just after the hatchery truck and spy a school of planted fish, try an olive or rusty-brown Woolly Bugger with a size-18 midge dropper trailing it about 12 inches. You'll get most of your grabs on the midge.

To reach the Silver Fork of the American River from Sacramento, head east on California Highway 50 to Kyburz, then turn right on Silver Fork

Road, which leads to the access points and campgrounds. (Be alert: Kyburz is no more than a pinpoint on the road, and it is easy to miss the turnoff.) From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 over Meyers Grade, past Twin Bridges toward Kyburz, and watch closely for the left turn before you get close to town. The two campgrounds occupy a beautiful setting next to the river, and, if the timing is right, fishing the campground water can be very good. For adventurous anglers willing to go to some difficulty for the chance at some very large browns, a hike down into the canyon can be very rewarding.



Fish Creek, AK

By Don Vachini

When my wife, Pat, and I planned to celebrate our 42nd wedding anniversary with an Alaskan cruise through the Inland Passage, angling wasn't specifically on the main agenda. However, when I noticed there was a scheduled six-hour layover in Juneau, I did manage to stow a four-piece fly rod plus some basic flies among my luggage in anticipation of this brief window.

In light of my time constraint, Brad Elfers, of Juneau Flyfishing Goods, (907) 586-3754, www.juneauflyfishinggoods.com, prudently suggested a do-it-yourself creek located within minutes of the cruise ship. While coastal cutthroat and Dolly Varden were the primary focus, he noted that I would also be around king, pink, and chum salmon as well.

With Pat happily browsing nearby shops, a taxi drove me across the Gastineau Channel bridge to Douglas Island, then followed the North Douglas Highway for 2 miles to Fish Creek. The pleasantly babbling, knee-deep stream is a creek freak's delight—an assortment of brushy log-

jams, narrow runs, shallow pools, and riffles flowing over small cobble, most of it shaded by an alder and spruce canopy. Juneau's heavy annual rainfall maintains yearlong flows.

Heading upstream from the bridge, I was alone, serenaded by raucous crows, an occasional yelp from a bald eagle, and the water's healing murmur. Immersed in the creek bed, I dapped, probed, and otherwise finessed my simplistic selection of generic beadheads through easy-to-read holds to consistently

entice scrappy cutts and Dollies to 10 inches. One log-entangled pool guarded by an umbrella of branches and requiring tight casts yielded a pair of olive-shaded, 12-inch char. Their darker coloration indicated they were holdovers hoping to gain a bit more heft before heading seaward.

Tumbling from timber to tidewater below the road crossing, the stream courses a grassy meadow before mixing with the salt water of Gastineau

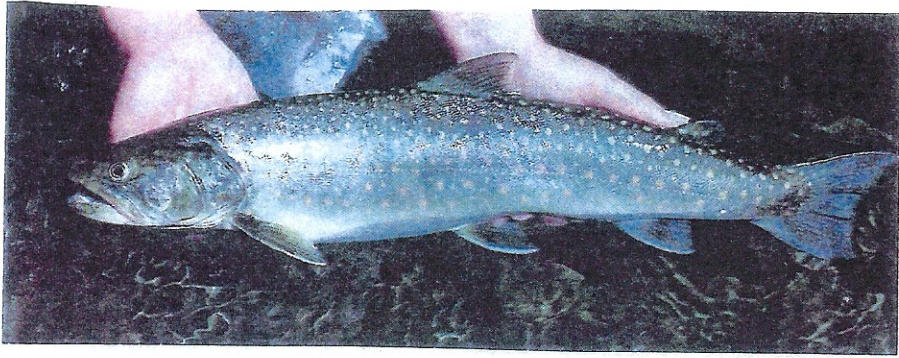


PHOTO BY DON VACCHINI

Channel. It was here, on an incoming tide, that I tangled with what I initially surmised to be a fresh-run salmon. Performing frantic figure eights in the swirling water, the red Glo Bug that betrayed it dangling precariously from its lip like a maraschino cherry, it tested both tackle and nerves. Upon beaching, however, it revealed itself to be a chrome-bright, near-20-inch Dolly!

Elfers explained that sea-run char of this size commonly move in and out of tidewater. "This one was probably heading upstream to lunch on salmon eggs."

A hatchery-produced run of king salmon begins in June; chum and pink salmon arrive during mid-July. Bottom-bouncing "anything red," according to Elfers (Greedy Beady, Glo Bug, Hamon Egg, or similar egg look-alike patterns), can be very effective for char and cutts when salmon are in the creek. Fry- and smolt-imitating Clouser Minnows and Sculpzillas and salmon fry patterns are other top choices.

For drop-in visitors, Fish Creek offers a perfect, quick-hitting chance at one of Juneau's many front-yard fisheries. Although car rental service is available from the airport, cruise ship escapees will be better served by taking a taxi to the creek and arranging for a pickup time. Information and advice can be obtained from Elfers by e-mailing flyfishing@alaska.com. To save valuable fishing time, he suggests purchasing your fishing license online and ordering flies from his shop's website well ahead of the trip.

Armed with minimal gear, I achieved maximum results during my brief four-hour Fish Creek junket. My punctual cabbie even returned

me to the dock in time to enjoy a pale ale with Pat at the Red Dog Saloon. Noting my obvious elation with the day's outing, she jokingly remarked that I gave new meaning to the phrase "cruising for trout"!

Roaring Springs Ranch, OR

By Chip O'Brien

Nestled atop a scenic wooded bluff in the foothills of Oregon's Cascade Range near Scio, Roaring Springs Ranch, (541) 495-2263, is a little-known Willamette Valley fee fishery for trout. Within striking distance of both Portland and Salem, the ranch is off the beaten path, so you'd better know exactly where you're going before heading out. For those willing to part with a nominal annual membership fee, though, that path is likely to become well worn.

Roaring Springs has two small ponds, one medium pond, and one gorgeous large lakelike pond on top of a hill. The trout, all rainbows, come from a small hatchery on the property. Not your typical hatchery fish, these

trout derive from nearby Roaring River brood stock.

The first pond, by far the most popular with anglers, holds the most fish. With ample room for back casts, a dock you can cast from, and a covered picnic area with a barbecue available for member use, it's no wonder visitors are drawn here, and many anglers never venture beyond. But that's a mistake. The two ponds situated between the popular first pond and the "lake" on the hill are fairly small, easy enough to cover without long casts, and loaded with fish. The riparian vegetation can snag flies on errant back casts, but for anglers who can place their casts precisely, these ponds are intimate, productive, and beautiful. The largest pond, meanwhile, is ideal for float tubes and pontoon boats, and stocked with the largest trout. Summer and fall evenings are a sheer delight on the big pond, the ranch's most scenic spot.

A variety of techniques are effective at Roaring Springs. Almost any day of the year, fish will grab weighted nymph patterns suspended under strike indicators. During warmer months, *Callibaetis* mayfly nymph forgeries are most successful, while midges reign supreme during cooler times. Woolly Buggers and leeches are frequently effective, and the fish will take dry flies almost any evening, especially during the summer. All angling on the property is fly-fishing-only, catch-and-release, with barbless hooks.

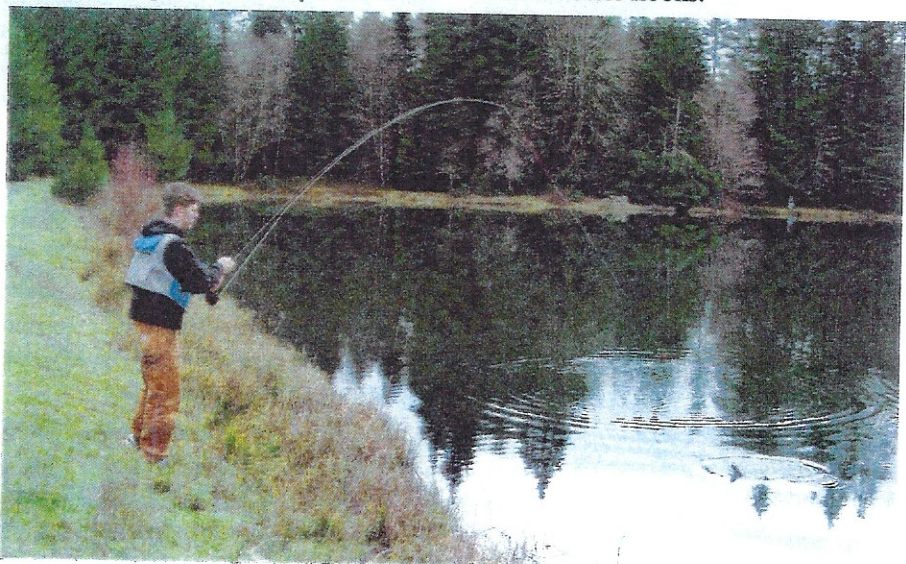


PHOTO BY CHIP O'BRIEN