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# 2002

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# 2003

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## THIS WAS THE YEAR OF LOW WATER

If you thought the summer of 1997 brought the lowest water ever in the Goodnews River, think again. It got lower still in 2002; in fact lower than even the oldest native in the village could remember. But the biggest difference between 1997 and 2002 was the water temperature. It never became abnormally warm like it did five years earlier, and this had a very positive effect on the fishing.

Lower-than-normal water levels do cause a change in fish behavior. This depends upon the depth of the river and the species (i.e. really low water is a disaster for Atlantic salmon). Our river was at its highest (but still a little below normal) during the first week of the **king salmon** season in late June, and the run started off strong. But as the river continued to slowly drop in July, less and less of the big salmon held in tidewater. Taking this into consideration, we still did well (not like the blockbuster season of 2001!) by concentrating our efforts a little further upriver. Nevertheless everyone caught big kings, and some truly great fish were landed, including one on fly that would have tipped the scales



near 60 pounds (released). And if anything, more of these kings than usual were chromers.

There were also very large numbers of jack kings (under 20 pounds), which bodes well for 2003. Historically a year with a great number of jacks has been followed by a strong run with larger than average kings in the next season.

There was no shortage of chrome bright **chum salmon** in tidewater, however, and like the last two years they were big. It took a chum over 12 pounds to really get any attention. The chums started to show early in July, and were eager to accommodate well into August.

But our biggest surprise was a flood of **pink salmon!** They almost disappeared from the river after the poor run in 1998, and most of us had given up all hope of their future return in any numbers. But true to their old form, they reappeared en masse during the last half of July and continued strong right into the middle of August. And as if to make up for their long absence, they came back bigger than ever. Quite a few were taken in the five to eight pound range, and in just one day two anglers fishing with G aboard the drift boat landed over 70. Will they be back like this in 2003? Hard to tell, since they have historically been an even-year fish in this river and definitely should be back seriously in 2004. But there will certainly be some of these tasty scappers around even in the coming odd year.

The effect of low water was to kick off the **Dolly Varden** run a little early. By the third week of July they were plentiful just a few miles above camp and as the river dropped they simply moved further and further up. Anglers who targeted them during the last week of July and the first week of August enjoyed many banner days with 30 or more over 20 inches. Look for an article by Dave Atchison on skating dry flies for dollies on the Goodnews in the an upcoming



issue of **Alaska Magazine**.

Perhaps the most profound effect of the unusually low water came during the **silver salmon** season, which started with a bang in late July and hit full stride during the first week of August. By now the river was really low, and instead of racing through tidewater and directly up the center of the river for many miles as they typically do during some low water years, they bunched up in the lower part of the river and the upper end of tidewater - and refused to budge! In fact they never moved until we finally got some substantial rain during the last week of the season. As a result the fishing was epic, with sore arms and tired anglers by mid afternoon the order of the day. On sunny days we needed long leaders to keep them on the bite, but the results were lots and lots of bright fish.

Apparently the lower water did affect the big **rainbows**. One

guess is that many of them followed the dollies and salmon that moved so rapidly upriver, thus taking them beyond our effective range. But some good "bows (to almost 30 inches) were caught nevertheless; it was just necessary to work harder for them.

On a sad note, one of our favorite regulars passed away this year. Arnie Wong was so popular among anglers and guides alike with his infectious happiness that we have

renamed the 23 foot Duckworth "Arnie's Antics" in his honor. A very productive bend (Wong's Way) on the Middle Fork had been named for him several years ago when he hammered the silvers unmercifully in one afternoon there. It also proved to be a real hotspot during this year's silver run as well. Arnie's last wish was that in lieu of flowers those interested might consider making a contribution the newly established Arnie Wong Goodnews Memorial Fund, the purpose of which is to perpetuate the quality of sportfishing on the Goodnews River. Contact us for more details. ■

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## Look for us on TV

**T**wo new TV fishing shows were made, primarily for HDTV by Terry Wickstrom and called "Outdoor Adventures", during the king season. Former GRL owner Ron Hyde was among those anglers featured.

And by the way, we would love to do a slide presentation on our favorite fishing spot. If you have a fishing club or other large group that would be interested, contact us and we will be happy to come to your town. ■



## Best of the Friday Night Follies



It would be hard to find a better way to end a week of super angling excitement and accomplishment. This after-dinner event is very much a well-established tradition, with guides and staff competing among themselves to create new categories for these awards. So for 2002 we have something old and something new, nothing borrowed and no one went away blue - except in the face for laughing so hard! Here are some of the highlights, and do we wish we had space for more...

Peter Felber received the **Hat Trick Award** for landing three super-big chrome bright kings over 40 inches long on fly in one day. Lots of other anglers came close to winning this one, but Felber's largest was well over 50 pounds! Bob Stearns got the **Flounder Grand Slam** for landing both a right-eye and a left-eye flounder (one on fly, the other on plug) on the same day. They were actually big enough to see without a magnifying glass!

The **MasterCard Award** went to Don Kane for donating "the little rod that could" to the river gods. A fitting burial at sea for a fine piece of gear. Details were not available at press time, nor was his guide volunteering any information, either. And **Grand Slam Awards** (all five species of salmon in one day) went to Gardener King, Davis Flower, and Vic Harlan. Many others caught four species.

The **Rookie Of The Year** was Bill Webster Sr., new to fly fishing and yet managed to go from

casting zero feet to over 40 before the week was out, catching his share of fish in the process. And of course there's the **Jimmy Nix Swim Club**, awarded this year to Richard Manley for his most impressive splashdown, to Bill



Haaker for his one-and-a-half gainer, to Troy Atkins for a 9-point Lindy into eight feet of water, to Vic Harlan (who might still be sleeping with the fish had his guide been a little slower), and to Ron Woody for a spectacular swan dive. A new division of the **Jimmy Nix Swim Club** created just this past year is the **Silver Snorkel Award**; recipients included Ted Metcalf for accurately counting salmon noses during an underwater survey in a pool on the Middle Fork, Al Roberts who claims he was simply trying to locate a rod he dropped, and Tom Gorton for scoping out the underwater details of a long section of bank after a splashy entry.

No season would be complete without new inductees into the **Dead Chum Society**. In many cases this can come about by simply snagging a moribund chum salmon during its final downriver drift toward the sea; in others we suspect that those fish were alive

(well, sort of) and simply played too long. New members of this elite group include Harry Boardman, Tom Crissler, Richard Manley, Jim Unger, John Rummel, Greg Whitley, Mark Rangitsch, and Peter Syak. Plus Don Parson and Gregg Whitley, who got theirs as a simultaneous double hookup! If they all promise to thoroughly launder their fishing attire before next season we will in turn allow them back into the dining room.

**Indian Love Stone Awards** (if we have to explain this one you've been living in a cave in Afghanistan too long) went to Jake Haaker, Art

Eschenlauer, Rose King, Gregg Whitley, David Kohler, Jack Globe, Kevin Berg, and Tom Crissler. And no, in spite of what they said we do not believe these hookups resulted in long runs and exciting acrobatics. On the other hand, the **Trick Roper Award** went to Charlie Chester who actually managed to lasso a live chum salmon and land it without hooking the fish in any way.

The **Nutcracker Suite** goes to Charlie Pollnow for singing loudly in an unidentified soprano while straddling the oarlock of his boat. And Dave Plautz managed the Best Hookset Award by planting the fly in his own chin. His guide denies having anything to do with this. This year's **Conservation Champion** went to Jack Glode for fishing without a fly for almost an hour. Talk about a real sport! The **First Silver Of The Year Award** went to Fritz Kirner, who managed to beach the mighty beast after a lengthy, brutal battle. ■

## Goodnews River Lodge

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## AVAILABLE DATES



Many of our weeks for the 2003 season are already full. But there are some spaces still available as this newsletter goes to press. Our current rates include the round trip charter air fare from Anchorage to Goodnews. Lodge - 6 max.

WEEK/DATES	PRICE	AVAILABLE SPECIES ( <b>Bold</b> = peak weeks of run)
1 June 14 - 21	\$3950	Kings, rainbows
2 June 21 - 28	\$4650	<b>Kings</b> , rainbows
3 June 28 - July 5	\$5395	<b>Kings</b> , rainbows, chums, sockeyes
4 July 5 - 12	\$5395	<b>Kings</b> , rainbows, <b>chums</b> , <b>sockeyes</b>
5 July 12 - 19	\$5395	<b>Kings</b> , rainbows, <b>chums</b> , sockeyes
6 July 19 - 26	\$4395	Kings, rainbows, <b>chums</b> , <b>pinks</b> , dollies, sockeyes
7 July 26 - Aug 2	\$4395	Kings, rainbows, chums, <b>dollies</b> , <b>pinks</b> , silvers
8 Aug 2 - 9	\$5395	<b>Silvers</b> , <b>dollies</b> , chums, <b>pinks</b> , rainbows
9 Aug 9 - 16	\$5395	<b>Silvers</b> , dollies, pinks, rainbows
10 Aug 16 - 23	\$5395	<b>Silvers</b> , dollies, pinks, rainbows
11 Aug 23 - 30	\$5395	<b>Silvers</b> , dollies, rainbows
12 Aug 30 - Sept 6	\$5395	<b>Silvers</b> , dollies, rainbows
13 Sept 6 - 13	\$3950	Silvers, dollies, rainbows
Any 7-Day Float	\$3250	Depends upon week chosen
Any 3-day float/4 day	\$4100	Depends upon week chosen

We furnish all camping gear, transportation, and guides.

