

Amber reports for October 2019

REPORT - October 2, 2019 time to tell a story

A MUST READ: for old and new Steelheaders



Addicted to Chrome

"I'm craving steelhead!• " Is what I, an Albertan, said back in January when I felt the addictive rush of blood race through my veins followed by a jolting squeeze of muscles and goose-bumps scattering up my arms. It's a certain addiction that I'd say all steelhead fisherman endure, and its one that we are happy to say that the only rehab is to go steelheading itself. "Yes, It's time• ." And another trip to BC's northern coast was born.

Mid-April I arrived to my paradise within the Skeena Region of British Columbia. April is always an unpredictable time of year to fish. Some rivers are blown out from rain and glacial melts, some aren't holding fish, or you're too early or too late for the prime time of the runs. The temperature can vary from minus 5 to plus 15 and it can rain or snow for the entire trip, but it's a risk worth taking every time.

We set up camp along the river bank and got the rods and pontoons ready to be first on the water in the morning. The first two days fishing new water seem to always be the "learning days• ". Scoping out the holes, runs, and tail outs. A few challenging days of unsuccessful float-fishing went by and I realized a key detail. There was no way there wasn't steelhead scattered throughout this river system, I was definitely drifting my pontoon right over their heads and from then on I decided I had to fish everything! Sure the big hole looked promising, the swirls of a slick look intriguing, and the seam of a run seemed obvious, but I learnt to not underestimate a shallow ripple or a swift wide rapid and to be sure to fish the entire length of each spot. And from then on, I was on to them.

I'll never forget my first steelhead of the trip. I had one buddy fifty feet downstream and another buddy fifty feet upstream. I was drifting over some shallow, fast-moving water and I decided to anchor myself in

the pontoon with my feet in thigh-deep water and toss a few floats out. Wham! My float submerged and I locked down on the centerpin and pulled the rod back. The steelhead darted down river, ripping line from my Islander. I gripped the rod high and it arched over my head while my palms and knuckles created the perfect tension on the reel. I started hollering at my buddy up-river to come help while I slowly backed up against the rivers current while trying not to lose the fish nor my pontoon that hooked around my waist. Together we landed a nice buck, snapped a few pictures and released it back in the river. My body vibrated with excitement and the steelhead cravings increase immensely-it was one of many to come.

The next few days we floated the same river, trialing different sections each time and drifting 10-hour days. Steelhead hit nearly at all the same holding spots as the previous day, and if there was one hit, it was likely you could get another.



To switch things up our crew headed to another river. This river was a few kilometers from the ocean and the steelhead were fast and ocean strong. We checked the tide charts and waited for the tides to roll in and the fish to race up. We walked and waded kilometers of water until our calves burned and thighs fatigued. Three of us fished this covert river for three days straight, hooking over seventy steelhead combined, and landing about a third of that. The fishing was surreal for an Albertan, content with hopefully landing a couple!

I will say though, we totally lucked out on weather! The water was clear on all the rivers, the mornings started off cool and warmed up to plus fifteen, and it didn't rain until the day we left. By the last day my body was spent. Every morning we were up at 4:00am, hauling pontoons and wading across currents. I would get back to camp each night thinking that I'd get to relax but then I got to gather wood, build a fire, cook dinner, then start another crazy adventure day.

I believe that's why a term "steelheading" was created. You don't hear "trouting" or "piking" or "perching" in Alberta. It's more than just fishing for a specific species. It's its own kind of adventure. It's the research, the hunt, the perseverance, the adrenaline, and the reward that all play together to make this crazy addiction one that you wouldn't want to live without, and that being said, I cannot wait for my next dose of "steelheading".

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