

The DOLLY VARDEN

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #224 —

In all the times we've fished at this lodge, the Dolly Varden (Dollie) has never been a primary focus; that's always been the King Salmon. There's a reason they call them Kings; the ones we catch are in the 20-30 pound range and up to 42" in length. The energy of a fresh one, just in from the ocean, can take your breath away. Unfortunately, the limit is only two per day, five for the season; so, on a typical seven-day fishing trip, there's always lots of time to fish. Sockeye Salmon have always been the secondary focus; they run only 5-8 pounds – but still are very exciting, when you're really into them. Dollies have routinely been just the third fish on the list.

This trip was different; I elevated the Dollie to be my #1 focus, spending more time in the small river in front of the lodge than ever before – enjoying

every hookup and weighing and measuring every big Dollie that I landed.

Bear River has a major Sockeye Salmon run each summer; they swim upstream from the Bering Sea into Bear Lake (about 10 miles or so), where they

spawn in the lake or in the tributaries. There's a fish-counting weir about 400 yards downstream from the lake, where they count and report all the Sockeye that swim through each day. The Dolly Varden move back and forth from the lake to the river, where they feast on their primary food source of salmon eggs and salmon fry.

This 400 yards of Bear Creek is a very special place to focus on Dollies, wading its waters and throwing almost

any wet-fly pattern on a five-weight flyrod – or a spinner on an ultralight spinning outfit. The fishing opportunity starts before breakfast and continues till bedtime, interrupted only by the call to fly to the coast for Kings or take a boat to the top of the lake for Sockeye – or time for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

"The fishing opportunity starts before breakfast..."

With my new focus, I fished for Dolly Varden part of every day – early, late and mid-day. The ultralight was a bit more effective, because you can put the lure in the water more times in an hour, reach areas that you cannot reach with the flyrod and more quickly bring in a hooked fish. Truly a memorable fishing trip, with the special focus on Dollies.

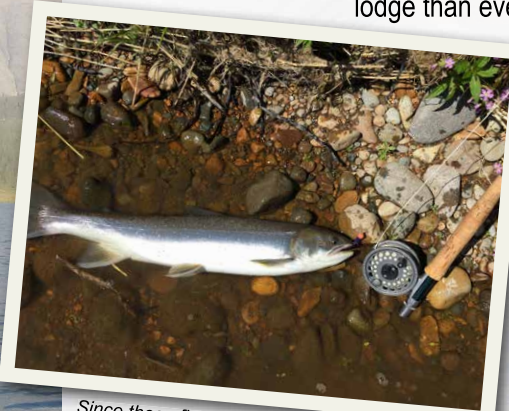
Midway USA

Larry Potterfield

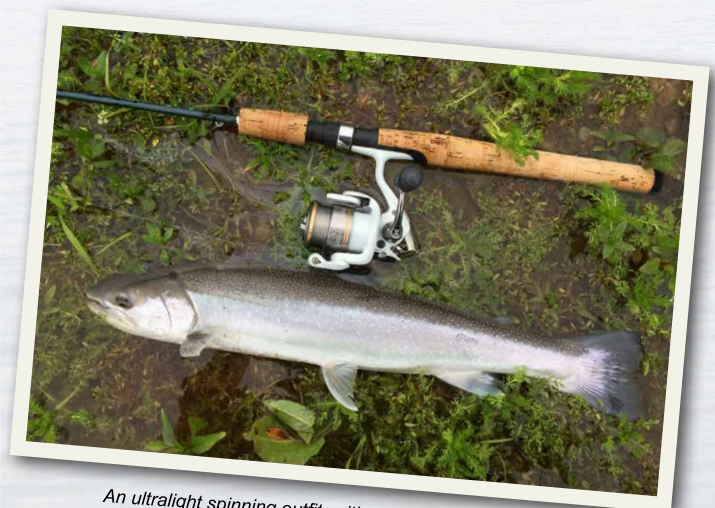
Bear Creek
Bear Lake Lodge
Port Moller, Alaska
30 June to 7 July 2018



A very nice Dolly Varden (Dollie) with a scenic backdrop. Yes, this is bear country; and I'm packing.



Since these fish see a fly only two or three weeks each year, every fly they see looks like something to eat. This one was 21" and weighed 2.4#; released him!



An ultralight spinning outfit, with a spinner and four pound test line is a lot of fun – and very effective.