

The River of Anticipation

Entering the trail to the river I am captured by the beauty surrounding me. The dark greens and dusky browns of the trees, the musky smell of the Skunk Cabbage and the iridescent colors and whites of the lilies suggest that spring is not far off. Sauntering along the trail, the gurgling of the spring fed creek awakened from its' winter slumber indicates the river should be in excellent shape with plenty of flow for the elusive Rainbow and Brown trout which inhabit it. The pace quickens, as I can feel the flow of adrenalin surging through my body in anticipation of the explosion of water when the fish smashes my fly. In the distance, the barking of a dog reminds me this is not a true wilderness, but that passes quickly as the river is close by. As I maneuver around the fallen log crossing the trail I hear an owl, screeching, calling out, perhaps sending a warning to the other creatures inhabiting this lush environment. Once again the pace quickens and down the trail I bound, waders flapping and pack slapping against my body. I can hear the roar of the river now, indicating that I am not far away from this Mecca! Suddenly, a deer leaps in front of me, startling me and breaking my cadence toward the rushing river. Just then, I awaken before the alarm clock screams to remind me that soon I will be able to return to my river of anticipation.



My earliest memories of fishing moving water came at the young age of seven or eight, I can't honestly remember! What I do remember is my father cutting a pole for me from a willow and attaching a line, sinker and hook, the basic essentials for a boy to begin his piscatorial journey. I could feel my heart pound as I approached the creek, not really sure what to expect, but knowing internally that it was going to be exciting. As I dropped the line into the water of the fast flowing riffle, a sudden jolt at the end of my line, followed by a leaping silver object exploding out of the water in front of me, assured me the trout was hooked, as was the fisher-boy! So began the journey which has taken me to many destinations, both local and abroad, in search of Piscator.

As I matured, the waters became larger and more challenging, as did the prey. Going from catching small trout in creeks to salmon over ten pounds in rushing rivers was an enormous leap. Many of the rivers from my youth fishing experiences involved searching for larger and more challenging fish. I still remember watching my first salmon spawning, fish were thick in the

river, moving through the water in schools, seemingly an unending abundance of silver mixed with the reds, blacks and pinks of earlier fish. Watching as the females used their tails to dig a slot in the river gravel to lay their eggs was fascinating. I observed the already spawned fish, faltering in the flow, the life slowly draining away from them, until they succumb to the current and float lifelessly into the backwaters. They now become the important nutrients for the future, their life cycle complete.

The river is a part of me. Like the flow of blood through my body the river also “flows through me”. It provides the life sustaining energy necessary to keep me going... balance, harmony, adrenalin and sustenance. As I wade across the stream I can feel the power of the flow, drawing me downstream, creating a “v” in the current and an eddy in front of me. A salmon, exhausted and weary from its’ upstream journey, slips into the eddy and pauses momentarily, fatigued from the several thousand mile journey it has completed. I provide a brief respite for the fish from the challenges of nature. A smile comes over my face as I realize in a small way I have given something back! The river is alive!

Each year this scene is repeated as I return to my river of anticipation. Each year there are transformations to this picture. Fewer salmon return, less water flows through the channels, some of the flora and fauna are absent. I anxiously await the alarm clock to go off, but to no avail. My heart pounds and my palms are sweaty, as I realize this is not a dream! My river of anticipation has been influenced by the collision with progress. Urban sprawl, global warming and habitat degradation have had an impact on this setting. There are no operations to fix this disease, only a search for hope and self-therapeutic relief. The river of anticipation will continue to be just that, a dream and calming relief for the boy who many years ago went in search of Piscator.

Wayne Pealo, IWFF

Adventure Travel Writer