

Kyuquot Sound - Part 3 - Tashish River

Bob Kissinger [basherbob@outlook.com]

My second trip to Kyuquot took place in early October 1988 as I had won a limited entry elk draw for the lower Tashish watershed. As my friend Tony had previously hunted this area we decided to go up the day before the opening to set up camp and to scout around.

Once again it was a left at Woss and an hour of lumping and bumping until we reached Zeballos, then a right turn and another hour of bumps and lumps to Fair Harbour. This time when we got to Fair Harbour, instead of being greeted with a pretty well treed harbour we were greeted with devastation. There wasn't one tree left standing. They had skinned everything right down to tide water.

After loading Tony's 14 foot Zodiac and his 8 foot skiff we headed down Tashish inlet to continued destruction. The last time I passed the Artlish I could not see the river mouth because of trees. This time it stood out stark and bare with nary a tree to be seen neither at its estuary nor along its banks. What we did see was a logging bridge over the river. Close to the Tashish estuary (**Photo 1**) we encountered a protected zone with no logging what so ever. We motored up the river about half a kilometer until the river became too shallow. The plan was to beach the Zodiac, transfer our gear into the skiff and then drag it another kilometer or two before setting up camp.

Just as we stepped out of the Zodiac we were greeted by a skittering sound, as a small back bear cub scampered up a fir about 40 yards away. My first thought was "Wow, neat"! My second thought, an instant later, was "Shit, where's the mom"! The answer was, right at the base of the tree, behind a very small huckleberry bush moving her head from side to side with some "wuffs" punctuated with the odd jaw pop . SHE WAS NOT HAPPY! Not wanting to shoot her we just backed off about 20 yards. She gave another wuff, down came the cub, and away they went.

After dragging the skiff about a kilometer we encounter an area where the river bank was torn up and fresh elk hair was scattered about. As it looked like a couple of elk had been recently sparring, we beached the skiff, grabbed our guns and stalked upstream.



Photo 1

About 200 yard later and around a bend we spotted two rag horn, three spike, elk bedding down on a sand bar about 150 yards upstream and across the river. This was at about noon on the day before my permit became valid. What a dilemma! As there was a large tree root ball about another 50 yards upstream that offered a better view we crawled up to it, peaked around and---- nothing. The two elk must have heard or smelled us and just left. Oh well no more dilemma. After setting up camp about another half kilometer up stream we went exploring up river



(Photo 2) but failed to spot any other elk. Tony however showed me the spot where a couple of years prior, a cougar had stalked

him. He has heard some noises behind him as he was walking through the forest. Then when he climbed down a fairly high river bank and looked back, there was the cougar grinning down at him.

The next morning and afternoon was spent stalking the river banks as the virgin forest was way too thick to walk through. Again no elk so in the late afternoon I staked out the area where we had seen the two elk on the way in. No elk came out but I was entertained by a bear diving head first into the river to drag out an old dead salmon. As it was becoming dark I started walking along the river back to camp. After not going very far I felt that I was not alone. When I turned my head to look across the river there was a bear ambling along, maybe 40 feet away, on the other side of the river turning his head to look at me. It was another one of those "oh shit" moments for both me and the bear. We both then turned our heads forward, pretended that we hadn't seen each other, and continued strolling along. Before too long the bear came to a downed tree on his side of the river. As soon as he reached it, he darted into the bush and was gone.

The next day was also elk less, but we had the pleasure of watching a mother bear and her two small cubs. The cubs hadn't a care in the world, running around, play fighting and turning over rocks just to see what was there. We saw them again a little later in the day when they used a log to cross the river just below our camp



(Photo 3). We did try some fishing in the pool by camp. Tony had brought a spinning rod with a blaze orange panther martin lure. Within a few cast he beached about a 4 pound sockeye that wasn't overly mature. He released it and quickly beached its twin. I then got a turn and beached another before the pool was spooked. That night it started to RAIN.

It was still raining the next morning so we did a short hunt without success. When we got back to camp the wind was starting to rise and as Tony had a new job interview within two days we decide to break camp and get out while the getting was still good. Tony cooked lunch while I packed the skiff **(Photo 4)**



The smell of cooking attracted a young, bear, probably about 3 years and on his own for the first time. He was obviously hungry as the normal yelling had no effect so we finally had to bounce a few rocks off him to drive him away.

All the way back to Fair Harbour it POURED as it can only do on the west coast. Our rain slicks meant nothing and we were soon soaked. Sadly when we went past the **Artlish**, it was puking just pure mud about 150 yards into the inlet. We were so wet that when we stopped for coffee at Woss about 3 hours later we found that the dollar bills in our wallets were still wet.

Stay tuned for the next instalment "**BIG Trout**"

cheers, Basher

About 5 or 6 years ago this system suffered a devastating flood. Much of the river was dramatically changed. I have no current information this river's condition. If anyone knows, please contact me.