

East Kootenay

by Bill Westover

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EAST KOOTENAY

The East Kootenay is located in the southeast corner of British Columbia and provides a wide range of fishing opportunities that can keep even the most ardent angler busy year-round.

Traditionally, the fishing season begins during late April and early May in the southern half of the region when anglers target rainbow trout on small low-elevation lakes. Throughout May, anglers make their way north through the Rocky Mountain Trench following lakes as they become ice-free. Fishing on these low-elevation lakes is generally good until mid-July when warmer water temperatures drive the trout deeper.

Four very different fisheries come on line during the summer months. Rivers and streams open to angling on June 15; however, they generally do not become fishable until after spring run-off. Most of the more productive river fishing is found in tributaries in the upper Kootenay River where westslope cutthroat trout come willingly to a fly. The best times to fish rivers and streams are from mid-July to mid-October.

Lake Kootenay is a reservoir formed by a Columbia River Treaty dam in Libby, Montana. The reservoir fills over the course of the summer and is usually fishable in British



Columbia by the end of June. Kokanee are the most sought-after sports fish in Lake Kootenay with the season running from early July to mid-September.

As fishing on low-elevation lakes slows down, many anglers head for the high-elevation lakes in the Rocky and Purcell Mountains in search of cutthroat trout. These lakes are generally ice-free during July and August

and support large populations of small cutthroat trout. Not only do high-elevation lakes provide an opportunity for anglers to combine hiking with fishing, but the areas also have spectacular scenery.

There are a number of small low-elevation lakes in the southern part of the East Kootenay that support bass, an introduced species to the Kootenays. Bass become more active during the warmer summer months and they are easy to catch and great to eat.

During the fall months as water temperatures drop, the small low-elevation lakes once again become favourites with anglers as trout fatten up for the winter months. Once these lakes freeze over, many of them support very productive winter ice fisheries. Depending on the temperature and elevation of the lakes, winter ice-fishing may run anywhere from December to March.