

# Kings and Corn

CHASING BIG FISH AND CREAMY CORN  
IN ALASKA'S INTERIOR—HELICOPTER INCLUDED

We arrived at Winterlake well equipped: heavy-duty surfcasting rods for the kings, Dynastar Bigs for the corn, one Bell let Ranger, 1,000 pounds of jet B fuel and, even more toxic, several cases of Red Bull energy drink. It was mid-June and there were 40-pound king salmon running. Tommy Moe, Jeremy Nobis, Kim Reichelm, and a handful of other hell-setters were on an exploratory mission for Moe's company, Chugach Powder Guides, scouting for "kings and corn" on the southern flank of the Alaska Range. During our adventure we found both—in Alaskan proportions.

Mission control for "kings and corn" was the Winterlake Lodge, about 100 miles northwest of Anchorage. Winterlake is a checkstop on the Iditarod Trail in the winter that, by summer, serves as a peace-of-ufishing retreat operated by well-known Alaskan gourmet cookbook author Kirsten Dixon and husband Carl.

Unlike the Red Bull, the Jet B was responsibly consumed - exploring the peaks surrounding Old Man Creek, a few clicks south of the lodge. With the excellent scouting of Moe's lead guide, Mike Overcast, we nailed three first descents the first day out, each one comprising over 3,500 feet of steep velvet. Several days later, we scored three more, one featuring a belayed entrance into the maw.

The terrain in this part of the Alaska Range is similar to the Chugach Range near Girdwood and Valdez for its steeps and vertical, but hasn't been hit nearly as hard by skiers and snowboarders, if any. Moe

aptly began calling it the Valley of the Goods for its unlimited lines - the ones that were all ours.

Meanwhile, at the confluence of the Talachulitna and Yentna rivers downstream, the king salmon were just starting to make their way up the Tal. We dropped in with the let Ranger like troops into Vietnam's Cu Chi province. And we felt just as vulnerable. Where there are salmon, of course, there are grizzlies. A few hundred feet away, a big one attempted to cross the river. He failed to overcome the current, which was raging with snowmelt after a record winter. Our heli pilot, Josh, was fondling his holster just in case.

After getting skunked on day one, Nobis started to feel the effects of Deadly Salmon Buildup, but when he finally hooked into one, it was Alaskan-size. He and Reichelm took the derby with king salmon that nearly kept the ship grounded when it was time to fly back to Anchorage.

**—Bruce Edgerly**

Chugach Powder is offering week-long Kings and Corn packages this season during the months of June and July, \$4,900 per person includes round-trip transportation from Anchorage, deluxe food and accommodations at Winterlake, and a full week of heli corn skiing, salmon fishing, and whitewater rafting. For more information, call 907-783-HELI or check out [www.alaska.net/~skiheli](http://www.alaska.net/~skiheli)

