

*Editor's Note: This article was originally written to partially fulfill the requirements of the Fall 2004 Intermediate Fly-fishing & Tying offered at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The piece is edited and reprinted with the author's permission.*

## **By Derek Hall**

The water where my story takes place is at Long Lake in the Matanuska/Wasilla area. This lake is part of the Kepler Bradley Recreation Area and can be accessed by turning off Mile 38 of the Glenn Highway. From there, go north on Coleen Street about a tenth of a mile, take a left (at the "Y") on Bradley Lake Avenue for two tenths of a mile until you reach Green Jade. Then take a right and continue for .6 miles past Canoe and Irene Lake (also good fishing areas). Until you come upon a trail head that goes down to various access points to Long Lake.

Long Lake is fairly large, about 74 acres with 2.4 miles of shoreline. The deepest part is about 55 feet. Although I prefer to use a float tube, other non-motorized boats and those with electric trolling motors are allowed. Canoeists beware; the portage is difficult. According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures can be used, and the season is only open May 1 to October 31.

It was about the middle of summer when my buddy and I decided to fish Long Lake. It had been pretty hot recently, so we decided that early morning would be the best time to go. Also, we would have plenty of light at that time.

We headed out with our float tubes and fly rods. I had my 6,7,8-weight since that was all I owned; however a 4 or 5-weight would probably have been more appropriate. Most of the fish in the lake were stocked that year. The fog was rising off the lake when we arrived at 3 a.m. We stood on the shore for a little while deciding what flies to use, and setting up our tackle. It's easier to do this on shore instead of in water on the float tube. We decided on mosquito patterns since the little heathens were smothering us. We hopped into our float tubes and pushed out onto the lake. It was a very quiet morning except for the occasional loud splash as a Rainbow trout would jump or rise to the surface. With Long Lake's catch-and-release status, we figure there might be some big ones out in the middle. We moved from our starting spot that was about 50 feet deep.

Well we fished for about an hour out in the middle of the lake without catching anything despite trying a variety of nymphs, caddisflies and mosquitoes. I decided to go closer to shore where I could have a little fun catching the five and six-inch stocked trout. I put on my mosquito pattern, and for about an hour or so had some fun pulling in a string of rainbows. It was about seven o'clock in the morning when I met up with my friend in the middle of the lake to have some sandwiches. As we sat there eating I decided to just leave my line out in the water. Since my fly line was pretty old, my fly of course sank out of sight. I didn't have a problem with this until it started to jerk, and then fell into the water. Luckily, I was able to grab it before it fell completely into the water. I couldn't believe it, I had a fish on, and it was giving me a bit of a fight. My friend couldn't believe it as the fish kept tugging my float tube around. Finally, I was able to bring it in. Since I have a ruler on the front of my float tube, I was able to see that it was 17 or 18 inches, not a bad catch. My friend took a quick picture, and I released the fish. It was quite an experience after fishing hard all morning to finally catch a large fish without really trying.

For the rest of the morning, we didn't catch much of anything else. It turned out to be a beautiful day, so we ended up having a great outing.

The costs for this trip from Fairbanks would be minimal: gas and food. There are lots of places to camp in the area so bring a tent or camper for a fun trip. I would say though if anglers were going to the Palmer to fish this pond, they might as well fish Canoe Lake, Kepler-Bradley Lakes, Echo Lake and Lake Irene as they are all within a half-hour drive of each. All of these easily accessible lakes are stocked with arctic grayling, Rainbow trout or both.