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Salmon Paradise Under Fire

by Hal Herring



Photo by Hal Herring

There are places in this world, if you are a hunter and a fisherman, that own a kind of mythical power, places where every one of the basic elements of what drives us are intact, and present. If we are lucky, some of those places are close to home. But most exist far away, in the vibrating silences of unbroken wilderness. One of these is the Mulchatna River in southern Alaska, where giant salmon, predatory veterans of lives spent in the far blue reaches of the oceans, roll in the shallows. These are fish that answer a call to come home to reproduce, to leave the oceanic vastness for the narrowing of fast Arctic waters, exchanging the threat of bluefin tuna and great white shark for sure death, after the spawn, in the jaws of bears and eagles. It is truly a passage between worlds, one only the

strongest and luckiest fish ever complete.

Fishermen come to the Mulchatna to tap into this, to experience the adventure of being in a place where the old powers - fish, bears, wolverine, caribou, wolves, rain, and wind - still own it all.