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**Cedar River:
A recreational
treasure**

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Fly-fishing on the Cedar River



BY MICHAEL HAMILTON

Many will tell you it's the location; 16 minutes from downtown Seattle or Bellevue; six miles northeast of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport; at the crossroads for three interstate freeways and four state highways; and, one of the prettiest darn trout streams you'll ever find running right through the center of downtown.

OK. This last "did you know" is not the usual Chamber of Commerce tidbit that you see advertised. But for a growing number of avid fly fishers, the Cedar River is an urban gem that is hands-down "ahead of the curve" when it comes to summer fly-fishing.

"The caliber of fish residing in the Cedar is astounding," notes Northwest fishing guide Dave McCoy, owner of Emerald Water Anglers. "Between cutthroat and rainbows, there are some extremely large fish, upwards of 24 inches, and many are the most beautiful trout I have personally caught anywhere."

On this day in mid-June, a light breeze – unseasonably warm – rustled the trees. McCoy was showing me some of his favorite water, "secret spots" he would say, as we walked and waded through riffles casting dry flies tight against the bank.

"Fish on", he shouted as a big-shouldered, beautifully speckled rainbow trout leaped out of the water like a circus act from its watery lie beneath a boulder. "Cedar River rainbows are fat, feisty and full of spirit. Landing these fish once you hook up is a lot of fun."

After a brief tussle, the bow came to hand, relaxed in the net, and the true wonder of nature revealed itself.

From June 1 to the end of August, the Cedar River is open to catch-and-release fly fishing only from Landsburg Diversion Dam, 22 miles upstream from downtown

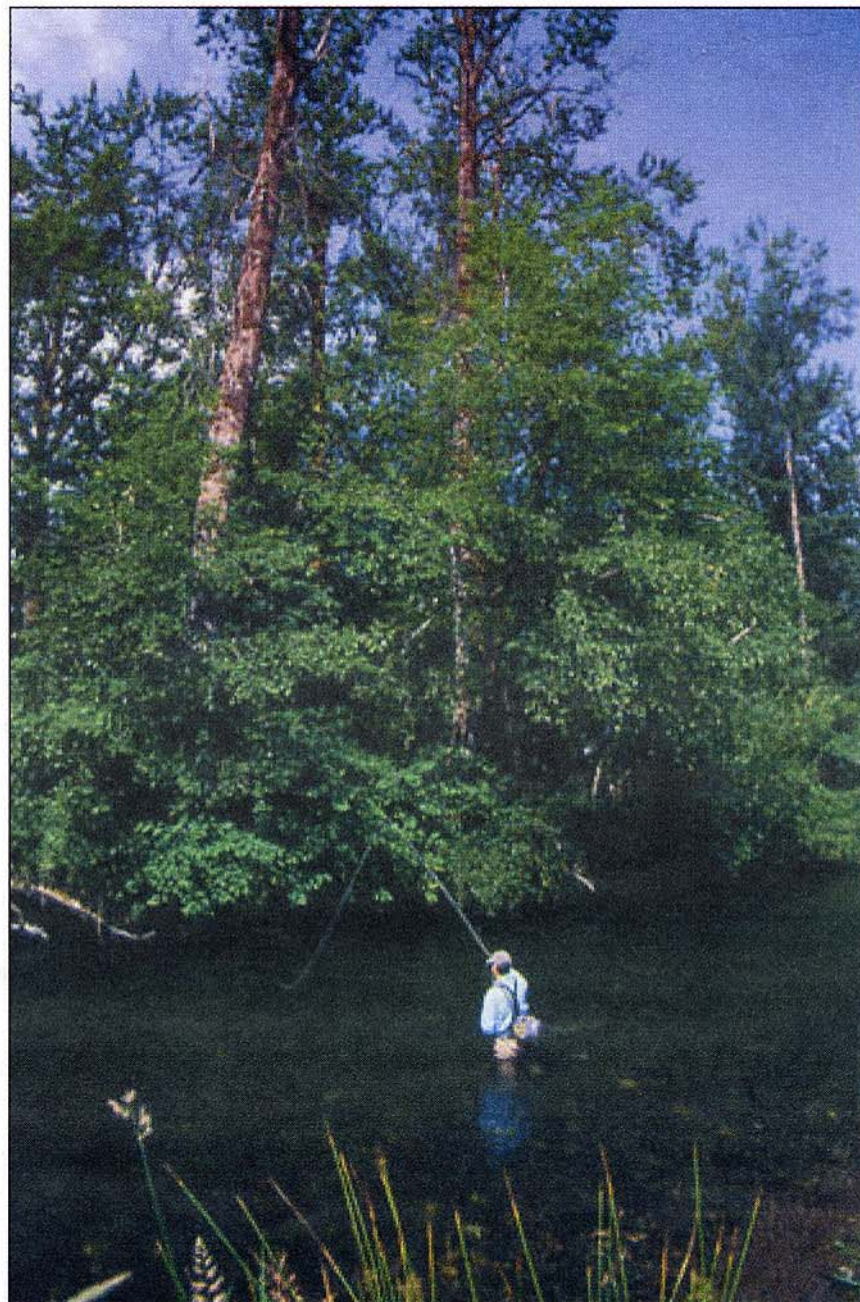


PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE MCCOY

A fly fisherman tries to tempt a summer-run steelhead on Cedar River.

Renton. You can walk and wade nearly the entire river from the Renton community center to the Landsburg Bridge.

Summer flows are too low for hard bottom drift boats. Walking reveals the river's intimacy as it meanders beneath a canopy of beautiful cottonwoods and maples. While much of the Cedar River is in the back yards of homes, this doesn't take away from the stream's uniqueness. Come late summer, the largest sockeye salmon migration in the lower 48 fills the river with shades of red.

After lunch streamside, we saw an eagle soar high above and looked down to find deer tracks in the sandy bank.

"Watching anglers discover what this little stream is all about and what it offers locals in the form of escape from the city while remaining quite near is really won-

derful," remarked McCoy. "This should be a beacon to the state fish and wildlife department that careful management of some streams can produce trophy trout fisheries for all to enjoy."

Back at my car, I changed out of my waders and slipped on a pair of slacks, dress shirt and shoes. I drove to my afternoon meeting relaxed, feeling flush with satisfaction and a world away from cell phones and e-mails. Fish caught or not, a few hours fly fishing the Cedar River was an enlightening and educational experience which will inevitably make the next trip even better.

Dave McCoy is owner and head guide of Emerald Water Anglers, LLC, Seattle, www.emeraldwateranglers.com