



Salmon in Örekil

Autumn is in the air as we drive over the Kviström bridge with its impressive arches, for the leaves have started to change colour. Beneath the bridge we catch a glimpse of the river Örekil and can follow its course until it takes a turn and is hidden behind yellow and red foliage.

Text and photos: Pelle Klippinge

I CONTINUE MY DRIVE upstream and through the small town of Munkedal, which this afternoon is like a ghost town in the wild west. Not a soul to be seen, a picture of peace compared with the eighteenth century when the Danes fought the Swedes under the very bridge we just drove over. Nowadays the only battles here are those involving Atlantic salmon.

Cruising the switchback roads for another couple of minutes we pull up next to a huge wooden salmon, marking the Örekil Fishing Office. Barely out of the car Mr Martin Dellien welcomes us with freshly brewed coffee. Right after this Erik Andersen from Oslo turns up with a nice salmon, straight out of the river, water still dripping from its tail and the silver scales glistening in the autumn sun. Joyously he tells us that this is his first fish ever caught on a



fly. The scale shows 6,2 kilos, a really decent start to a life of fly-fishing.

We congratulate him and ask what fly he used whereupon he holds up a sparkling 3 inch Red Sandy. The salmon in the Örekil do not seem the least choosy when it comes to fly sizes or taking in low water.

The tasty coffee is soon finished and we drive up to the A-beat where we are to start our shift. We jump into our waders and soon the first

Spey cast is rolling out. I start at the small pool Gunnarshöljan and almost immediately have the joy of landing a beautiful, silver, sparkling salmon - quite small but a great start.

Later, up at the thunderous falls of Bråland, where the river cascades from a steep cliff, we see salmon leaping up the fish ladder; one back looks particularly broad. We continue our walk on dangerously muddy tracks and fish Haggar pool,

Svarterännan ("Black chute"), and Livesand, beautiful pools like a string of pearls surrounded by dense, deciduous-forest.

A GP fly kisses the surface when it lands far out in the pitch-black water of Livesand. Here the deep water, boulders and streams are close to the bank, a combination of factors that make it an excellent pool. There is not a nudge on the fly. but I enjoy the sight of several Grey Wagtails



sweeping over the river, back and forth, graceful with their long tails.

A September afternoon passes quickly and the beat is long. We pass Källan, Bredsten and Fura, (freely translated as the Well, Broadstone and Pine). A couple of local spin fishermen are taking a break and they too have caught nothing. Our boots are caked with mud as we make our way downstream in canyon-like surroundings. We fish pretty pools



Döen and Lerhöljen, and there - straight out of nowhere is a steep mountain wall on the other bank, at least 15-20 meters high. When we've reached Skäret pool, just north of Munkedal community, the sky darkens and I make my final few casts to the soothing sound of an owl's hoot. Not a touch on the line but as I roll out there's an eruption of splashing. Sadly it is not a gleaming silver salmon but a flock of mallard.

Next day the water is still low but that means good conditions for the B-beat where we fish today. This beat starts just below the Fishing Office, and that is where I make my first casts. This pool is called Sammanflödet, and is a miniature junction pool where the river Munkedal joins the Örekil. I have not progressed far when it starts to rain. The excitement increases and the fly

sweeps over every conceivable salmon lie. I

can see no one else with a bent rod, although I get a half hearted pluck on my fly. Soon the water begins to colour up which gets me full of expectation for it is time for the salmon to start moving upstream.

I leave the river for a brief lunch and Martin tells me of a nice 7 kilo salmon caught down by the bridge. It was a cock fish, well coloured from the peat in the river, and it was quickly released. Other fishermen had lost fish and local anglers had been spotted with fishing rods on their cars, always a good sign. Surely salmon are on the move.

The rain became even heavier as we walk down to stunning Kviström bridge. We seem to spend as much time changing flies as casting them out into the stream but nothing we



do encourages the salmon to take. We wade deep, lose our footing and stumble about, all for nothing.

Kviström bridge seems a lost cause, so I direct my steps up to Junction pool instead. There is a determined pull on my fly at the same spot as before; it just has to be a salmon. I try him again but nothing and then I change to a Red Frances on a copper tube and after an inch perfect presentation the fish is hooked. After

a few runs up and down the stream I beach a small, fresh run fish.

Mid evening and another guy stands with his rod in a bow; it is almost completely dark by now, but I try to get some photos of the fight. Minutes later a 4 kilo salmon in its autumn finery takes a gasp of the humid September air, before being slipped back into the river. As its tail strikes the surface I call it a day, and a good day too.

Although it stopped raining and conditions improved no more fish were caught that night. Martin told us the morning after, 'It's our last day and we shall try the A-beat again'. We slip and slide on tracks that are even muddier after the rain and pull out our finest arsenal of flies. Then I make the best cast for the season in Livesand pool, long, straight and - up into a branch! When I pull the fly line the whole branch breaks off

and it is bonus time. It is festooned with beautiful salmon flies! Yellow and red seems to be the favourite combination.

Far down in the tail of Livesand the line tightens, a salmon indeed, and a big one too but just as I am getting ready for a long battle the fly comes whizzing back to me. The hook is needle-sharp so I continue to cast but without success.

I make my way further

Örekil River

www.orekil.com

May 15 – September 30

Limited fishing permits, book in advance. The Fishing Office telephone +46 524-107 77. A, B and C beat, 5-6 km long, flyfishing or spinning, stunning surroundings, wild fish.

Total length of river Örekil 90 km, fly only pools, 20-30 meters wide.

Primetime, August and September.

Peat stained water, yellow, red and orange flies.

5 year average catches= 286 salmon/season, 5 year average weight = 4,1 kg, record salmon 17,2 kg.



downstream and have a few casts in Bredsten. As in almost every pool in the river it is short casts, so the single-handed rod is useful. I get down to the high shelf by Fura, which is a swell holding pool. While I fish downstream I discover that the big, solitary tree that gives name to the pool is not a pine at all but a willow. I land a nice, one-kilo sea trout down by the tail.

Time to head back and again



I slip and stagger for the last time this year on my felt soles, and I am thinking how difficult it would be to carry a 5 kilo salmon. I can barely carry transport myself so just as well, perhaps, that I didn't catch one!

About an hour north of Gothenburg, The Örekil river is a secret to many but it boasts good and consistent catches. The first salmon is often caught in early May; in 2010 the first showed up on opening day,

May 15th. It is in Autumn that the river really

delivers, for most of the salmon come in during August and September, and these months account for the majority of catches. The largest fish in 2010 weighed 12,6 kilos and the average weight was 4 kilos. A total of 389 fish were caught. ■