

Trout Site – Arctic Char

Bring Your Insulated Waders!
By Bob Willis

In the United States, Arctic Char exist in only the land-locked version. Alaska and Maine both have Arctic Char in sufficient numbers to make them Char destinations, but the fish are in fresh water lakes in both states. Iceland was a better Arctic Char destination because these trout were located in almost every stream and lake. Some would argue that Iceland is not in North America. Iceland is where the North American Tectonic Plate meets the European Plate and about half of the Island is technically in North America.



This is a nice Arctic Char from Iceland. Most streams and lakes on this Island that is about ½ on the North American Continent have Char.

I have fished for Arctic Char in Alaska, Maine, and Iceland. Maine has relic Arctic Char that are landlocked and is the only place in the lower 48 states where it is possible to catch char. The problem is that the char lakes in Maine are all hard to reach and the fish are difficult to catch. I have fished Maine and Alaska for Char and have not had much success. Iceland was a different story. Arctic Char are common on the Island, and fun to catch. Everywhere I have fished for Arctic Char required insulated waders, but the water in Alaska was actually the coldest. The Char rivers I fished in Iceland were spring fed and in August were not as cold as the lakes in Alaska I fished in September.

I have spent a lot of time fishing for the relic Arctic Char of Maine. There are nine lakes in the state that have these rare fish and I had to see what they looked like. They are called Blueback Trout in Maine and are not a highly sought fish. They are hard to reach and difficult to catch. It took me three years and I fished most of the lakes in the state that held these fish. Blueback's tend to be deep water fish and from a fly fishing perspective it is difficult to get a fly down to where the fish typically locate. This is especially true as the water warms during the summer. If you want to catch Blueback on a fly rod, fish early in the year and fish quick sinking line. I did

manage to catch four Blueback Trout on my last visit to Maine when I fished the area around Presque Isles. The area is difficult to reach, requires 4-wheel drive, and a mile walk with all of the tubing gear. The people I talked with in the area were amazed that I was able to catch four Blueback's in one afternoon of fishing. That gave me a hint about how difficult it is to catch this special relic Arctic Char.

If you want to find out more about fishing Iceland and the relic Arctic Char of Maine read the Arctic Char chapter in the book or e-book **Trout Adventures – North America**.