

second edition

FISHING THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

JOEY AMBROSI



*an angler's guide to every lake,
river & stream*

HANCOCK HOUSE

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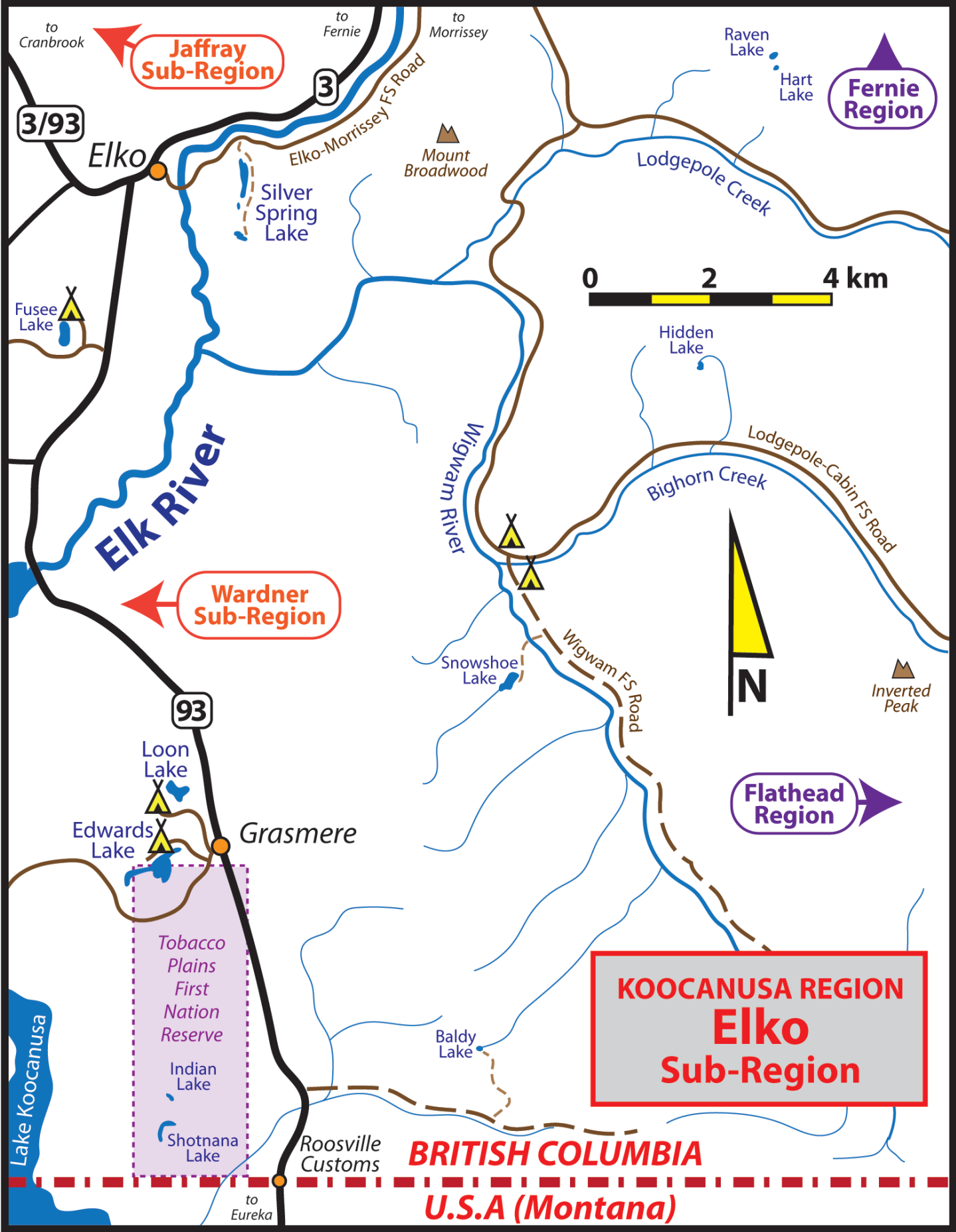
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KOOCANUSA REGION: Elko Sub-Region

body of water. The rainbow trout in the first lake grow to good sizes, with the average being 30-40 cm in length. Fishing is very productive off of the scree slopes along the east shore, and at the shallows at the south end of the lake. The shallows can be especially tantalizing during low-light periods, when many of the larger fish move there to feed. A well-worn trail continues past the end of the first lake to the second and third Silver Spring Lakes. The second lake, half a kilometre beyond the first, is a shallow pond that does not hold any trout. Fifteen minutes of hiking past the second lake brings one to the third lake, a dark body of water with high cliffs on several sides. Forest cover and extended shallows make shore fishing difficult. One of the better options is to fish off of the 5m-high rock bluffs, where you can at least cast to fish-holding waters. The difficulty arises when you hook a big one and have to figure out how to land it. There are other ponds beyond the third lake, but none has been stocked.



Silver Springs Lakes (First Lake)



Silver Springs Lakes (Third Lake)

■ Burton Lake (BC)

49°19'01"N 115°08'57"W

Brook trout to 45 cm

Rainbow trout to 45 cm

Burton Lake is located just west of Elko, and is accessed by a gravel road off Highway 3. From the parking area, it's a steep walk down to the lakeshore. Casting room is at a premium due to forest cover and a series of cliffs. Burton's cheerful green waters are home to a population of brook and rainbow trout, most of which run in the 25-35 cm range. Lures and spinners are very effective at Burton.



Burton Lake

■ Wigwam River (BC)

Cutthroat trout to 50 cm (1.5 kg)

Bull trout to 70 cm (4.0 kg)

Whitefish to 40 cm

The Wigwam River is a major tributary to the lower Elk River and was one of the East Kootenay's first experiments with catch-and-release fishing. Catch-and-release has been an unqualified success on the Wigwam, with fish stocks as healthy as anywhere in the Rockies. The primary access to the Wigwam River is over lengthy logging roads from Morrissey at Highway 3. The upper reaches of the Wigwam Forest Service Road tend to vary between rough 2WD and 4WD in quality. Cutthroat trout in the Wigwam River are plentiful and generally range from 25–35 cm in length. Virtually every likely looking spot will have a trout lurking about. Large bull trout also make their way up the Wigwam River in summer from the Elk River to spawn. Many anglers plan fishing expeditions around their annual return.



Wigwam River

Curtis Hall photo



Wigwam River bull trout

Curtis Hall photo

■ Snowshoe Lake (BC)

49°08'49"N 114°57'20"W

Cutthroat trout to 40 cm

Snowshoe Lake is hidden in a side valley off of the Wigwam River. Finding Snowshoe Lake is usually an angler's first problem. To reach the lake, one first must ford the Wigwam River, approximately 4 km above its confluence with Bighorn Creek. Once across the Wigwam, it's a matter of finding a rough trail that leads up to the lake. Normally, the outlet creek of a lake would be a good landmark, but Snowshoe's outlet flows underground and is of no help. One kilometre up from the Wigwam River, Snowshoe Lake is found amid its pleasant forest and meadow surroundings. The lake fills up after runoff in late spring, and then gradually drops in level over the summer to a low point in the fall. The cutthroat trout in Snowshoe Lake average 25–35 cm in length, and can be taken from most locations along the shore.



Snowshoe Lake

■ Baldy Lake (aka Thomas Lake, Ted's Lake) (BC)

49°03'52"N 114°58'45"W

Cutthroat trout to 35 cm

This tiny pond is located high in the Galton Range, at the head of an unnamed tributary of the Wigwam River. Although the lake is in the Wigwam River watershed, it is reached by a 5 km trail from roads in the Phillipps Creek drainage. Baldy Lake has been stocked in the past with cutthroat trout, which are reported to be present in small sizes and limited numbers.



Baldy Lake

Janice Strong photo

■ Lodgepole Creek, Bighorn Creek (aka Ram Creek) (BC)

Cutthroat trout to 40 cm

Bull trout to 60 cm (3.0 kg)

Whitefish to 35 cm

These two main tributaries to the Wigwam River are easily accessed from Forest Service Roads that parallel the creeks for their entire length. Small cutthroat trout, in the 20-30 cm size range, are the normal catch.

■ Harvey Pass pond (BC)

49°17'38"N 114°43'34"W

Cutthroat trout to 25 cm

This small lake, which drains westward into Lodgepole Creek, is located alongside the logging just west of Harvey Pass (the pass between Lodgepole and Harvey Creeks). Heavy brush surrounds the lake, and just finding an opening to make a cast is very difficult. The lake holds small cutthroat trout, few larger than 20 cm in length.



Harvey Pass pond

■ Hidden Lake (BC)

49°14'23"N 114°52'19"W

Cutthroat trout to 40 cm

Located north of Bighorn Creek at the head of a steep, narrow valley below Overfold Mountain, Hidden Lake does not attract many anglers due to its very difficult access. The lake contains cutthroat trout that are small (20–30 cm) and easy to catch. There is heavy forest cover and lots of deadfall around the shoreline at Hidden Lake.

■ Raven Lake (BC)

49°20'38"N 114°52'54"W

■ Hart Lake (BC)

49°20'32"N 114°52'59"W

Cutthroat trout to 35 cm

These two tiny lakes, located less than kilometre from each other, are found in the Lodgepole Creek watershed. Both lakes are on a bench at the top of Flathead Ridge and can be reached by hiking reclaimed mining roads that traverse the length of the ridge. Cutthroat trout have been stocked in both lakes, with the size of most trout caught being in the 20–30 cm range.

KOOCANUSA REGION: Elko Sub-Region

Illegal introduction of non-native species

Two popular lakes in the East Kootenay are now closed to sport fishing because of the introduction of largemouth bass and yellow perch. Both Fusee Lake and New Lake (near Cranbrook) have been stocked illegally by a person or persons who a provincial fish biologist has described as being from “the low end of the gene pool.” The stocked trout in the lakes cannot compete with the bass and perch and subsequently suffer drastic decline in numbers. The invasive fish also eat native amphibians and could introduce new parasites or diseases. Authorities have a “zero tolerance” policy for illegal introductions and the closing of the lakes is meant as a disincentive to further introductions. The lakes will be assessed and a plan will be developed to eradicate or suppress the perch and bass.

⊗ **Fusee Lake (aka Fussee Lake) (BC)**

49°14'36"N 115°09'42"W

Status: Closed to angling

Brook trout

Rainbow trout

Largemouth bass

Fusee Lake is a small, shallow lake off Highway 93 that was good for brook and rainbow trout. Illegal plantings of largemouth bass and yellow perch into Fusee have forced authorities to close the lake to angling.

▲ **Loon Lake (BC)**

49°06'52"N 115°06'23"W

Rainbow trout to 60 cm (2.5 kg)

Loon Lake is located on a wooded bench, approximately 2 km west of Highway 93 and the small community of Grasmere. A large forestry campground is at the lake. A boat is recommended for fishing, as the lake is fairly large, and the trout tend to stay in the deeper waters, other than late in the evening. The rainbow trout in Loon Lake are Blackwater Lake stock, which tend to do well when there is baitfish around. Loon Lake has red-sided shiners and the rainbow trout feed on them and grow rapidly. Trolling is the most popular technique on Loon Lake, although fly fishers who use a sinking line and a streamer will also do well. Loon Lake and its nearby counterpart, Edwards Lake, are generally ice-free by late-March, which is much sooner than most lakes in the Rockies.



Loon Lake

Loon Lake rainbow trout

■ **Edwards Lake (BC)**

49°05'36"N 115°06'45"W

Rainbow trout to 60 cm (3.5 kg)

Edwards Lake is located south of Loon Lake, approximately 2 km west of Grasmere. Fishing from shore is possible at Edwards, particularly at the east end, where the lake narrows significantly. The rainbow trout in Edwards Lake grow quickly on the abundant feed, and trout caught from the lake average 25–40 cm in length, with some big, fat lunkers in the 2-3 kg weight class taken regularly. The lake is not very deep and is susceptible to winterkill on occasion. Fly fishing is great at Edwards, whether tossing a dry fly to rising trout or trolling a nymph through the deeper waters.



Edwards Lake

■ **Shotnana Lake**

49°01'04"N 115°05'47"W

■ **Indian Lake**

49°01'28"N 115°06'09"W

(Both lakes on Tobacco Plains First Nation Reserve)

Brook trout

The two lakes on the Tobacco Plains Reserve were stocked in the past with brook trout. Today, Shotnana Lake is little more than a dried-up slough. Permission is required to fish either lake.

Jaffray Sub-Region

The town of Jaffray, situated just south of Highway 3, is the main centre of human activity for this Sub-Region, which stretches east from the shores of Lake Kookanusa. Lake Kookanusa is the dominant physical feature of the area and has been increasing exponentially in terms of angling attention in recent years due to the popularity of its kokanee fishery. Many of the Sub-Region's lakes, including Surveyors, Baynes, Suzanne, Tie and Rosen, are unique in that they contain largemouth bass. Virtually all of the Sub-Region's lakes can be reached by vehicle on paved or gravel roads.