



Gifts from the Kinni

My son Chris, his girlfriend, Carrie, and I headed downstream on the Kinni from the access at River Ridge Road. It was time to teach Carrie how to catch a trout on a nymph. I told her that if we walked for 30 to 45 minutes, stopped, and then fished our way back, she could expect to catch a trout, and we'd be back at the car before dark.

On the walk down I rattled on about the natural beauty of the lower Kinni and its flora and fauna. I was trying to create a mood just in case the fish weren't biting. (You know, there's more to fly-fishing than just catching fish.) But Carrie was in an anticipatory fervor as she bounced along with her bead-head pheasant tail and strike indicator already rigged on her line.

As we passed the bench on the south side of the river, I noticed a flaming scarlet flash, then another. That stopped me in my tracks. To my surprise, it was two Scarlet Tanagers (*Piranga olivacea*) that I had seen. I broke from the path and walked into the dark woods to take a closer look. To my delight the Tanagers let me get surprisingly close. I took several fairly close up pictures and then called for Chris and Carrie. All three of us got good shots. As we penetrated deeper into the woods, we ultimately counted 16 Scarlet Tanagers. Their scarlet red bodies and jet-black wings were stunning. Carrie, being a bird watcher, was blown away. I, too, was thrilled with our bonus side trip. I knew that if my trout guiding skills failed, at least Carrie's first adventure on the Kinni would be a positive experience.

After this excitement, I gave Carrie a ten-minute lesson on fly-casting. Of course, the lesson was too short, but she seemed like a natural, so I left her alone. On her first fly-fishing trip Carrie managed to catch three browns on her pheasant tail and one brown on a streamer.

We got back to the car long after dark, but I was floating on air. The Kinni had given us two gifts that day. However, during the ride home we talked more about the Scarlet Tanagers than the trout. We wondered if these birds were moving through or if they were going to nest in the area. Arriving home, we got out the bird book and read descriptions of the bird, its habitat, and its ranging area. As exciting as it was to see the Tanagers, Carrie couldn't help asking, "How soon can we hit the Kinni again?"

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