



St. Mary Angler Fishing Reports

2003

(Report # 18, 2003/09/27)

We are near the end of season, but the St. Mary River continues to fish well!

Today was one of those warm fall days we dream of. A balmy 78 degrees, clear skies, with a slight breeze... a gorgeous day to be on the River fly fishing.

The water conditions are low, normal for this time of year. This makes walking and wading very easy as we are able to cross the River in some areas that we normally can't. So we had lots of options for different types of water on this day.

We spent the trip dry fly fishing for our wild west slope cutthroats on the middle section of the Mary. The River fished exceptionally well as the fish were coming up everywhere to feed on our flies. We had many, many fish on line and everyone had a pile of fun. The biggest cut was 17 inches and the average was the normal 15.

The dominant hatches on the day were Blue Wing Olives and October Caddis. However, we ended up using big attractor patterns as they were really working well. We used a variety including; Turks Tarantula, Royal Stimulators, Royal Wulff's and H&L Variant's - sized 12 to 18 hook. Today was a real fun day with great fishing to accompany beautiful fall conditions. The River remains very productive as we near the end of a great season.

The staff and guides of St. Mary Angler wish to thank all of our clients for coming to fish with us this year. We hope to see everyone at the tradeshow. Dates will be posted in November with locations. Thanks again for supporting us and have a safe and healthy off season.

(Report # 17, 2003/09/22)

The walk is worth the effort on the Skookumchuck River!

Today we decided to exercise our legs a bit (more like a lot!) and take a stroll deep into the Skookumchuck River. It was a beautiful fall day for a hike with mostly sunny skies and a high of about 70 degrees.

The 'Skook' this time of year remains 'gin' clear and levels are holding well. As some

sections of the Skookumchuck have been closed as of September 1st for the protection of the Bull Trout spawning, we walked quite a ways into some of the more remote areas. As is usually the case with these remote systems, the farther you walk the better the action. The walk was made pleasant by the moderate temperature, sunny skies and the turning of the leaves.

This fall day was one of the best days of the year! We all hooked numerous westslope cutthroats, the average size being 15 inches and the biggest being a nice 17 incher. We observed some October caddis's coming off, but decided to stick with the traditional patterns. We had good success using Royal Wulff's, H&L Variant's, Blue Wing Olives and Royal Trudes all in the size 14 to 16 class.

Fall is a great time to fish these southeastern B.C. streams as the fishing pressure has dropped off significantly, but the fish are still active and willing to go.

Hope to see you soon!

(Report # 16, 2003/09/18)

Fall is fine on the Elk River!

Today was a typical fall day on the Elk River. Things started out cool, then we had a little rain and cloud before things warmed up in the afternoon, topping out in the high 60's. It was a perfect fall day for fishing.

Today we had a couple of boats floating one of the lower sections of the Elk. Once we got going we hopped out from time to time to work the bank edges, when not drifting and working the runs and big holes. The water levels are low, normal for this time of year. Fortunately, we have been pretty lucky in 2003 as the river level never got as low as it can in a dry season like this year.

We had a very productive day. All four anglers caught big cutthroat in the 17 inch range with the average size at about 15 inches. We caught some very nice fish. The morning was particularly good, perhaps 'the best this season' according to one of the guides. The predominant hatch was the Blue Wing Olives coming off the water. We had very good success using Cripples, Callibaetis and Blue Wing Olives in sizes 16, 18 and 20. The fishing was so good today that the consensus is that we head back out to the Elk tomorrow for another fun trip!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report # 15, 2003/09/09)

Summer temperatures have broken and fall is around the corner.

The daytime temperatures have finally dropped into the low 70's. We are starting to see more cool mornings as fall is almost upon us. Just recently, the back country was so dry that all access was closed for a full week. However, we have received some much needed rain lately and the Ministry of Forests reopened the back country to full use. We are lucky to have access across private land on the St. Mary, so we were not effected by the closure.

Water conditions are normal for this time of year. Very skinny in some spots but definitely fishing very well. We are still able to float the St. Mary hopping out to fish the back channels.

The St. Mary River fished very well today, under overcast skies. We caught between 30 and 50 fish, average size 14 to 15 inches with the biggest being a nice 17 inch cutthroat. The dominant hatches were small Blue Wing Olives, as well as a few big October caddis. We were using size 16,18 and 20 Blue Wing Olives, Griffin Gnats, ants and caddis emerger patterns.

September can be a beautiful month to fish our region with crystal clear waters and crisp blue skies, set against the full fall color backdrop. However, we are close to the Rockies so dress in layers as the mornings are cool and the afternoons warm to hot.

Hope to see you on the river soon.

(Report # 14, 2003/09/02)

The fishing on the St. Mary is hot, unfortunately so is much of the back country!

We are still experiencing beautiful weather as it has been sunny and warm everyday for weeks. The mornings are now becoming a little cooler which is very refreshing. Fall is a few weeks away, but is coming.

The water conditions on the St. Mary River are holding at a normal level for this time of year. Great for the dry fly fishing. The fishing has been outstanding lately, either from the boat or when wading the river's edge. The average size cutthroat caught today was 15 to 16 inches. The biggest fish caught and released was a nice 19 inch rainbow which is very rare on the St. Mary.

The hatches on the river were dominated by some Blue Wing Olives and grasshop-

pers. We hope to see some October caddis soon, but they not quite here yet. Today we used mostly Royal Wulff's, Lime Trudes, Parachute Adams and regular Adams sized 12 to 16.

All of the southern B.C. backcountry has been designated 'closed' by the Ministry of Forests due to fire hazards. So if you plan to head up this way please check with the Ministry to see which roads are open. We at the St. Mary Angler are lucky to have access to the St. Mary River through private property and once we are on the river we are fine to use the banks up to the high water mark.

Hope to see you soon.

(Report # 13, 2003/08/14)

The lower Elk River is producing well!

Today we ventured a little east to the Elk River where we fished one of the lower sections. The weather was again beautiful and hot into the mid 80's. The sky was little hazy due to the smoke from one of the wild fires in the region. The water conditions are still good; very clear and not too low.

We spent most of our time fishing from the raft, however we did get out to fish some of the more promising runs. Due to the hot weather and the resulting rise in water temperatures, the fish have moved into the deeper holes on the Elk. So we are now using stronger leaders and tippetts so we can retrieve and release them a little quicker to reduce the strain during this hot stretch.

The average fish caught today was 14 inches - nice and healthy. A couple beauties in the 17 inch range were caught and released as well. We used mainly dry flies. Sized 14, 16 and 18 caddis, Royal Wulff's and ants worked well. We also had good success with sized 10 and 12 grass hoppers and green drakes. No significant hatches we observed today.

Hope to see you on the river soon!

(Report # 12, 2003/08/13)

St. Mary River float - short but sweet!

Today we ventured out on the St. Mary River for a short float. It was sunny and hot with the peak day temperature around 90 degrees. In the early afternoon the wind picked

up a bit, but not enough to disrupt our fishing. The water is holding clear, but levels are starting to drop as we have had no significant rain for quite awhile. The lower water levels are more of a concern for the guides, than for the anglers, because they can end up pushing or pulling the raft along from time to time!

Today was somewhat unusual in that the client was looking to start late and end early after arriving on a late evening flight the night before. So we eyed up one of our more productive sections of water and ended up concentrating on a mere 2 mile stretch of the St.Mary. As it turned out this section of the River was really on today as we found a few wonderful places to float and wade for the day. During the trip many fish were rolled, landed and released. The biggest cutthroat was about 16 inches and the average size was in the 14 inch class.

The flies that worked well were the Royal and Grey Wulff's and the stimulators - yellow and orange sized 12, 14 and 16. There was no significant hatch on the river to report.

As it is fire season in British Columbia there are some road closures in the back country to our high mountain streams. The road to the Wigwam River is closed so check with the B.C. Ministry of Forests if you are going out on your own. There is no danger that access to the St.Mary or Elk will be effected by road closures.

Hope to see you on the river soon!

(Report # 11, 2003/08/09)

The Skookumchuck River is well worth the hike!

Today we packed up our lunches along with the 4 and 5 weight rods and headed way back into the canyon of the Skookumchuck River. We walked for about an hour through dense tree cover along a barely recognizable trail to find our secluded destination. The cool shade created by the forest canopy was very welcomed on this high 80's day with only a few clouds to hide under. Once we got to the River we were anxious to set up and get ready to fish for these wonderful westslope cutthroats. The nice thing about this hike is that few anglers venture out this far so we pretty well had the River to ourselves!

The water conditions on this high mountain stream are now gin clear and perfect for walking and wading. Today was a lot of fun as we hiked and fished the numerous deep emerald pools of the Skook. We had good catch rates with the average sized cutty caught and released at about 15 inches and the largest beauty coming in at a bit over 17. It is not hard to tell that mid summer has been reached in southeastern British Columbia as the grass hoppers are now the dominant insect - they are everywhere

today! Mayflies are also hatching on this day, but 'hoppers rule!'

Today was especially fun on the Skookumchuck as we were fortunate to fish only with dry flies. As wonderful as it can be, the Skook can turn moody at times and we occasionally have to nymph to have success. But today was a great day for dry flies as the cutthroat were accommodating. We had good success using Grey Wulff's, H&L Variants, Dave's Hopper and Parachute Hoppers.

After the day on the River we hiked back through the forested trail. It is satisfying to know there are still places where one can go that are secluded, yet accessible, possessing great cutthroat fishing in an enchanted setting!

Hope you can join us on the water soon!

(Report # 10, 2003/07/28)

The St. Mary River is in it's 'summer groove'!

Today we fished the heavily braided section of the St. Mary River. The weather was sunny and hot with the mercury pushing 100. The water levels are holding very nicely, but with all this hot weather they will drop somewhat over the next month. The River was crystal clear making the visibility of the fly very good for our opportunistic feeding cutthroat trout. One of the nice things about these fish is that they will readily take the fly on the surface even when there is no hatch occurring!

We floated and waded the St. Mary, getting in and out depending on the look and feel of the river. Being able to hop in and out of the boat to walk up the channels provided some great fishing opportunities, as well as an opportunity to cool down in the refreshing water. The average size of fish caught on this day was the typically healthy and bright cutthroats in the 14 to 15 inch class. As the water has reached it's summer clarity we could track the fish as they bolted from the stream bottom right to the fly. The biggest fish caught was an exquisitely colored 17 inch cutthroat!

The dominant hatch on the Mary was grasshoppers as they are now 'all over the place'. We responded with our arsenal of dry flies - our specialty. We used Dave's or Joe's Hoppers, sized 8 and 10. We also used allot of the traditional patterns such as Adams, Parachute Adams, Royal Wulffs and Caddis Emergers- sized 12, 14 and 16. All in all we had another great day of fishing on the St. Mary River.

Just a reminder to make sure to bring along a set of polarized sunglasses on your trip. It really makes seeing fish a lot easier on these brilliantly sunny days! If you need a new pair, or any other fly fishing equipment, remember that we have a fully stocked fly

shop where you can meet all your fly fishing needs and desires!

Hope to see you on the river soon.

(Report # 9, 2003/07/25)

The Elk River continues to produce 'wonderfully'.

The other day we headed out to fish one of the lower sections of the Elk River. As was the case for most of the last two weeks, the weather was beautiful with sunny skies and warm temperatures reaching the high 90's. The water conditions remain clear as the river level continues to drop a bit each day.

We were floating the Elk and wadding the sections with the nice pools. On a couple of occasions we waded as much to cool off as to fish! The fishing was really wonderful on this day as we caught and released numerous cutthroat in the 14 to 15 inch range. The biggest fish caught and released was just a tad over 18 inches! Nice fish.

The dominant hatches on the day were Pale Morning Duns and caddis flies. So we 'matched the hatch' and used PMD's and caddies, sized 14 and 16, in addition to ants, sized 10 and 12.

The conditions on the Elk are excellent as we enter the peak summer fishing period.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report # 8, 2003/07/15)

The Elk River is in 'outstanding' form!

On our latest trip to the Elk River the weather was absolutely beautiful with very little wind and a high of 90 degrees. Water levels have dropped into the summer 'normal' range and water clarity is very good. The Elk is in great shape in terms of flow, clarity and weather... now for the fishing!

Fishing the Elk is a little different from the St. Mary in that we tend to float in the boat a little more. That said, we still get to hop out and take advantage of some of the great holes along the way. The Elk tends to feel bigger than the St. Mary, but in reality they are both pretty well the same size. The St. Mary tends to meander and braid more as it travels through flatter terrain.

We were very pleased with our day on the River. Along with the great conditions the fish were really aggressive. The average cutthroat caught was 15 to 16 inches with a few big girls in the 18 to 19 inch category. Along with the good sizes, the catch rates for the day were also very good.

Pale morning duns were the most prevalent hatch on the Elk this day. We responded with an assortment of dry flies including; Pale Morning Dun imitations, Parachute Adams, Renegades, stimulators and ant patterns. The sizes ranged from 10's to 16's.

The Elk has taken a little while to settle down this spring, but it is now fishing extremely well. Hope to see you on the Elk soon!

(Report # 7, 2003/07/06)

The freshet is over and summer weather has arrived on the St. Mary!

Most of the high snow pack in the Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges has now disappeared. The daytime temperatures are consistently in the early 80's - sunny and clear with a light breeze on the water. Summer time fishing conditions are almost here as well. The water is crystal clear in the upper 3/4's of the St. Mary and the levels are now in the upper end of their normal summer range. The lower 1/4 section of the River is still a little green due to some clay bank action, but as the water drops in the next few days the problem will cease.

On Sunday we floated one of the upper sections on the St. Mary and were able to fish both from the boat and shore with ease. In a word the fishing was 'outstanding'. The average size of fish caught was in the 14 - 15 inch range. We also were fortunate to catch some beauties in the 16 and 17 inch classes. We rolled, hooked, landed and released many cutthroat on the day. The combination of the heat, breeze, bright colors and light reflecting off the crystal water really drove home the sense that summer is here.

The dominant hatch was a round of big yellow stoneflies in the afternoon. We outfitted our lines with some good sized terrestrial patterns and big attractors which worked really well. Stimulators, Royal Trudes and ants size 10's & 12's did a great job of attracting the trout.

As summer has arrived across our region, the Elk River has also cleared and dropped quite a bit. Walking and wading the Elk is now possible and conditions continue to improve every day.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #6, 2003/06/30)

Water levels are dropping as the St. Mary River rounds into form.

We have been experiencing a string of warm summer days lately with temperatures in the high 70's to low 80's. The days have been mostly clear with the odd cloud dotting the sky and accompanying light winds. Water conditions are good with levels dropping steadily and visibility is already at 8 feet of depth in some areas. The improving water clarity is really contributing to the activation of the St. Mary's cutthroats. We are still mostly floating the deep sections, stopping at the braided areas to get out and fish the runs. While we are wading more each trip out as water levels drop, we are still working primarily from the boats.

On today's trip, everyone had good success and a lot of fun. All three boats gave the fish a good workout, kids as well as the parents. All the children hooked and released 4-5 fish in the 14-15 inch range. A couple of the parents hooked around 30 fish each and landed about half of them. The biggest fish was caught and landed by one of the ladies - a nice 17 inch cutty!

The hatches coming off the water were dominated by Yellow and Lime Sally's and there were a ton of them. The flies that were working well included: Royal Wulff's, Stimulators, Chernobyl Ants and Double Humpies.

It was an "all ages" show on the St. Mary today and everyone had a great time!

We hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #5, 2003/06/17)

The St. Mary River is open and ready to go!

The St. Mary River opened on June 15th with the guides taking to the water for a test fish the following morning. The weather conditions were excellent with sunny skies and warm temperatures peaking in the high 70's. The guides hit the water around 10.30 a.m. and fished right on through to 7.00 p.m.

The water conditions were understandably high, normal for this time of year, but clearing nicely. It is still a bit green out in the middle sections of the river, but the edges were definitely clear and fishable. In reviewing our 2002 Fishing Reports, we are seeing these conditions a full three weeks ahead of last season. What a difference a year can make!

The guides approached the day with a combination of floating and fishing the deeper water, and stopping occasionally to walk back up the many side channels to test the shallow sheltered areas. With the river running fast like it is, the fish tend to hold up in the back channels. This is where the group had some of their best success on the day.

Many nice cutthroat in the 13-15 inch range were caught and released. Each angler landed at least one in the 17 inch category. It seems the biggest fish are still holding in the bottom of those murky holes. In general, there are fish scattered pretty well throughout the water column. We will have to wait another week for the water levels to recede to the point where the fish start to settle into their summer lies.

In terms of hatches, the stone flies and June bugs were on the move and being tracked by the cuts. The boys responded with an assortment of dry flies including orange and yellow stimulators, Sofa Pillows, Guide Savers and Chernobyl ants - all sized 10 and 8's. As the water drops and the season moves on a bit, we will see them start to key on the more traditional patterns.

All in all it was a great day of fishing and the river seems to be setting up well for the upcoming season without any large changes in course or feel. We expect the fishing to be very good this weekend as the temperature hit 90 today and the river is quickly settling into its early summer groove.

Hope to see you on the river soon!

(Report #4, 2003/06/15)

The St. Mary is ready to float!

Today the St. Mary, Elk and all the rivers and streams of our region open for fishing. The water levels have been dropping steadily and the clarity is good. We are pleased to report that the St. Mary is ready to float! Our guides will be doing a test fish on the 16th for changes in river morphology, sweepers and most importantly to see how it is fishing.

Stay tuned for a fishing report on Wednesday.

(Report #3, 2003/05/19)

Spring is taking its time again this year, but things are finally starting to heat up!

We were off to Premier Lake on May 19th where we found the weather a little chilly - in the low to mid 50's. As we await warmer temperatures and the accompanying heat and runoff from snow melt, the water remains crystal clear and cool at about 45 degrees.

Not to be deterred by the weather, we hopped into our 14 footer determined to heat things up. Over the course of our five hour trip we caught several really nice rainbows in the 14 - 18 inch class. The hatches consisted mainly of chironomids and callibaetis mayflies and our most productive patterns were beadhead chironomids and gray hares ear. While we had a fun trip on this brisk spring day, Premier Lake is capable of producing way bigger fish at a much greater frequency. Until the weather heats up we will not see the type of fishing this lake is famous for.

As of May 28th, the weather has finally turned around with temperatures in the mid 70's. As a consequence, runoff in the St.Mary and Elk rivers is up dramatically. Unlike last year when the spring runoff was very late, the snow pack is now starting to loosen up quite a bit. This is good news for everyone as the rivers will be 'all settled down' for the June 15th opening! Hope to see you then.

(Report #2, 2003/05/2)

Nine Bay Lake is open for our fishing pleasure!

On May 1st and 2nd we ventured up to Nine Bay Lake to give our new pontoon boats a kick. Nine Bay is located a few hours north of Kimberley near Golden B.C. The first day was pleasant and sunny, around 57 degrees, but the second day showed us the other side of spring with some overcast conditions and intermittent showers. Lake levels have yet to rise much as the cool weather is limiting snow melt up here.

This was the opening week for the lakes in the Columbia Valley and we were not disappointed. The three of us had pretty good success with many nice rainbows landed in the 18 to 22 inch range. There were a couple of larger fish hooked and retrieved with one rainbow coming in over 4 pounds... what a beauty!

The chironomids dominated the hatch in colours ranging from green to red. We responded with Ice Cream Cones, Olive Chironomids and Chromies on long leaders and tippets ranging from 10 to 16 feet. We had good success by holding along the drop-off ledges and fishing the top 20 feet of the water column imitating the insects as they move toward the surface. The wet line also produced well using leeches, Doc Sprately and damsels fishing way down along the bottom. The pontoon boats were a real treat as they are so easy to launch and are easy to maneuver under both calm and windy conditions.

While it is still very early in the season we had great couple of days. As temperatures rise we expect to see more robust chironomid hatches and more action on the part of these beautiful rainbows!

(Report #1, 2003/04/21)

Spring has sprung at our 'Premier' Lake!

With the ice all but disappeared from on our high mountain lakes, we took to the water on the Easter weekend. Our destination was Premier Lake, one of our favorite early season big rainbow ponds. The weather was sunny and warm as it ranged from 64 to 72 degrees. The water levels are normal for this time of year as they engulf the vegetation around the rim of the lake with a temperature of 50 degrees.

We started our trip by situating the boat at the edge of a sizable drop-off with a 12-14 foot leader and tippet down. It did not take long to find out the fish were as anxious to get the season going as us! The lake fished really well to start and continued to produce very well all weekend. The two of us landed over 40 fish in one afternoon alone. While most of the rainbows ranged from 17 to 19 inches, we caught some beauties as big as 22 which took us straight into the backing. What a way to start the 2003 season!

The chironomids were coming off the lake in abundance in a wide variety of colours. We found that Chromies gave the most steady action, although leeches and damsels were productive as well.

After the last four months of tradeshows, marketing, teaching fishing techniques and setting up our new fly shop, it was sure great to get back out on the water and put all that talk into action! The season is off to a running start and we sure hope you can make it out to partake in some incredible early season fishing!