



## St. Mary Angler Fishing Reports

2005

### Review of 2005 Season.

In 2005 the snowpack in south-eastern British Columbia was well below normal for the second year in a row. In general, the winter temperatures in the Kootenays were also warmer than usual. In December, temperatures were 4.3 degrees Celsius (8 F.) above normal. This resulted in higher stream flows throughout the winter months and lower accumulations of snow. The snowpack was as follows: 57% of normal on January 1, 82% February 1, 75% March 1, 76% April 1, 64% May 1 and 35% of normal on June 1. Subsequently, the spring runoff was limited with flows hitting the maximum freshet in early June. These conditions meant that the spring lake and river fishing seasons started early again this year. The summer began hot as usual and remained nice throughout July, August and into September with only a few occasions of inclement weather. The season finished under clear and cool conditions in early October.

We kicked things off in the last week of May as we took to Premier Lake under clear skies and hot spring temperatures of 26 degrees Celsius (79 F.). After the previous winter of tradeshows and marketing - and in the midst of relocating our fly shop across the street from our old address - it was nice to get back on the water! After refreshing our minds on the best spots and the most effective techniques for the Lake, we proceeded to tie into 20 bulky rainbows between the two of us in a half day of fishing. The largest rainbow pushed 20 inches, what a beauty!

Over the next few weeks we spent as much time as we could on the alpine lakes of south-eastern British Columbia. We were also extremely busy renovating our new shop space, learning the nuances of the new Classified Waters licensing system for East Kootenay Rivers, as well as purchasing and customizing some new drift boats.

With the low snow pack and warmer than usual winter temperatures, we did not experience much of a freshet on the rivers as the runoff was gradual. The lack of much runoff meant that the river geomorphology (i.e. depth, width, channel structure, etc.), pretty well stayed the same as it was last fall. Our guiding season started on time and no trips had to be canceled due to wet spring weather conditions.

The St. Mary, Elk and all the rivers and streams of our region opened on June 15th. By June 26th we were out floating the St. Mary River amid hot summer like conditions. While the water was still a little high, it was clear and we were catching cutthroats, in addition to seeing the odd 'whopper' bull trout.

By early July the rivers were rounding into form as clarity was good and levels were coming down. The St. Mary was floatable from top to bottom and we were having a great time fishing while the Stone flies, Yellow Sallys and Caddis were dominating the hatches on the River. We were experiencing good catch rates for cutthroats and hooking the odd 17 plus specimen. Daily maximum air temperatures were hitting the early 80's and the skies were clear.

Our first trip on the Elk River was on July 12th. As usual the Elk took a little more time to round into form as it does not have the luxury of a headwater lake like the St. Mary does. However, the Green Drakes, Pale Morning Dunns and Caddis flies were coming off steadily and the fishing was good.

By July 20th, the rivers had found their summer groove. The Stone flies were pretty well done, Caddis were abundant and the grasshoppers were just about to come on strong. We were experiencing good catch rates and landing some nice big cuts in the 16-17 inch range. By the end of July all the rivers were in peak form and we had some very enjoyable and productive trips to the Elk, St. Mary, Skookumchuck and Bull rivers.

August saw us experience increases in catch rates and bigger fish, along with the usual hot summer weather. We were still experiencing good water levels for floating as the low snow pack was not affecting us. We had some great days on both the St. Mary and Elk rivers in terms of the catch rates, size, and the level of fun!

September started where August left off in terms of the fishing. The weather continued to be warm to hot by midday, but cool in the mornings. In terms of the hatches; October Caddis and Pale Morning Dunn's were starting while the grasshoppers were slowing down. The fishing pressure on the St. Mary and Elk rivers fell off dramatically - this is the best time of year to fish if you can spring the time! By the end of the month we were still seeing some great fishing, but the weather was more spotty with some days of precipitation. The season ended with an early October trip.

While 2005 started with a low snow pack, flows remained good throughout the season. The weather was also excellent pretty well all summer long. In addition, we opened our new fly shop and everyone survived the first year of the new government licensing system! It was another great year of fishing in south-eastern British Columbia. We are so fortunate to have this great set of rivers and lakes to enjoy. We look forward to next year and wish you a healthy and prosperous off season. Hopefully, we will see you at one of the winter trade shows. In the meantime, the watersheds of south-eastern B.C. are covered in snow and the rivers, lakes and fish are silently preparing for next season.

Take care,

Kelly Laatsch, St. Mary Angler Fly Shop.

**(Report #20, 2005/09/2005)**

### **Fall is fun on the Skookumchuck River!**

Today was a beautiful day to be out on the water. The leaves on the trees are all changing colors and the cool crisp mornings lets you know summer is over, fall is here and winter is starting to show signs that it is not far off! While recent mornings have started out in the high 30's (3 Celsius), it has warmed up to around 65 degrees (18 C) by mid afternoon. Today we had a few clouds looming above us, but nothing that could spoil our walk along the emerald waters of the Skookumchuck.

As we drove toward the Skookumchuck River you could tell that hunting season has started as we saw very little wildlife. The upside to this is that all the locals are hunting, which leaves no competition out on the streams. Once again, we had the River to ourselves. So we put our rods together, caucused over the appropriate fly and headed out along the trail to the River. Today we walked for quite awhile before we decided to break off the trail and head down to the water.

As the Skookumchuck has many large boulders and rocks strewn about the watercourse, we had lots of choices for great fishing lies around all of the natural structures. However, the waters of the Skook tend to move quite quickly in and out of these rock structures, so it can be a bit of a challenge to get a good drift on the fly. We fished some pools and we walked along the rocks to get in that good cast wherever possible. We made sure we did not catch the trees behind us as it got a little tight in some areas and we were forced to resort to the roll cast!

But it was all worth it as the Skookumchuck fished wonderful! September is a great month to fish as they are still very active when feeding. We caught and released around 15-20 cutthroats each. The average size was 15 inches, but we were fortunate to land a couple nice cuts over 17 inches.

In terms of the hatch, Duns were coming off, in addition to some October Caddis. We tied on Grey and Olive Duns sized 14, 16 and 18. We also tried a few small Drake patterns and Royal Wulffs.

There is still time to get out and fish. So before you pull out the hunting gear, think about giving us a call for one last trip down the rivers of southeastern B.C.!

Hope to see you on the water soon.

**(Report #19, 2005/09/12)**

### **Sometimes, one pool is all you really need in the St. Mary Canyon!**

On this day we were feeling the effects of a cold front that had rolled down and covered the southeastern corner of British Columbia. Fernie, which is close to the Elk River, received close to one foot of snow, so we really did not have high expectations for this trip out!

Given the circumstances, we asked the angler if he wished to postpone his trip until the next day, or if he wished to venture out. He decided to give it a shot even though it was raining a bit and cold in the morning. On the day it only warmed up to a 'high' of about 55 degrees (13 Celsius). So off we went to the Canyon section of the St. Mary River which had been fishing well in recent weeks.

The water conditions remained clear on the St. Mary even though the level had risen about one foot due to the rain. That really is the beauty of St. Mary Lake located near the headwaters. It always saves the River from turning cloudy due to sudden increases in precipitation or snow melt. We were cautiously optimistic about the increase in water level as we could now comfortably float over sections that were becoming a little rocky at the lower flow. So with clear water and more flows, we were off to see what the River Gods had in store for us!

We floated most of the morning. The weather was quite cool and the fish were not moving or feeding very much. After a nice lunch on the River, and our new found enthusiasm bolstered by some warm drinks, we floated down to the next hole. Around 1:00 PM, we noticed the fish were feeding at the bottom of a run. So we pulled over and got set up in a good casting location hoping to ride the obvious hatch that was occurring. Our fisher proceeded to work the water with good results right from the start, catching many fish on the dry fly.

While the morning provided little action the afternoon heated right up. The angler proceeded to catch and release around 25 cutthroats from 1 to 5 p.m. in that one pool! After all, why bother moving when the hatch is coming off and the fishing is just awesome! While some of the cuts were in the 14 to 15 inch window, others were in that plump 16 to 17 class!

The hatch coming off in that little "secret" pool were small Grey Duns - sized 16 to 18. A fly that small is tough to see so he had to concentrate very intently on the line. We were pleasantly surprised with the great afternoon fishing after the morning we had experienced. In terms of flies, we used a Grey Dun to 'match the hatch', as well as an October Caddis and Blue Wing Olives to mix things up.

In terms of competing with other anglers for good fishing locations, there were no other people on the River this day. Mind you, with the recent snow in the high country and light rain in the valley, one has to be one motivated angler when the weather gets like this. That said, what a great day to be out on the River!

The weather will clear up shortly so you still have time come out and fish that "secret" pool in the Canyon, as well as the rest of the River!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

**(Report #18, 2005/09/06)**

**The St. Mary River: Conditions in the Canyon remain productive.**

Today we fished the Canyon section of the St. Mary River. We like this stretch of the River as it possesses many nice pools that the fish find very attractive. In addition, the pocket water behind the big rocks and along the banks is in great form these days!

The weather today, and all this week, has been typical for early September. Each day has started off with a cool morning, warming up into the high 70's by mid afternoon (mid 20's Celsius). As summer slowly melds into fall, the trees are starting to turn color and we are starting to see some of the leaves on the water. The sight of the turning leaves against the blue sky with the Rockies in the background is just breathtaking!

The water on the St. Mary is still in great form. This summer we have experienced ideal conditions as the levels have been good all season and the water temperature has also be optimal most of the time.

We floated allot today, but as usual we stopped and fished the most promising runs. We also anchored up from time to time to fish the bank edges or close to a fallen log. Everyone knows that some of the big fish tend to like to lie close to those log jams, or under a log. Anchoring up gives as an even chance to move them outta there!

The St. Mary fished very well today. It was a little slow in the early morning, but by mid-morning onwards the fish turned on and were feeding steadily. We caught and released about 45 cutthroats between two anglers today. Most were in the average size slot of 14 to 15 inches. We did catch and release a beautiful 18 incher. The cutthroat have done very well this season as they are nice and chubby!

October caddis are starting on the River, as well as PMD's. The Grass Hoppers are still around, but they have slowed right down.

In terms of the flies we used today, we used some of our special hand tied flies that we have created along with Royal Wulffs, Lime Trudes, various Ant patterns and PMD's.

This time of year the Kokanee are starting to come up the rivers to spawn. That said, it does not affect the cutthroats who continue to feed and provide good action for anyone able to get out on the water.

Hope to see you on the River this fall!

**(Report #17, 2005/09/05)**

**Little flies pay big dividends on the Elk River!**

Today we decided to travel east to the Elk River where we fished one of its lower sections. As it turns out, it was a great choice on this late summer day.

The weather was beautiful, with clear and sunny skies. The temperature was cool in the morning, but reached an afternoon high in the late 70's (25 degrees Celsius).

The rivers in the East Kootenays are still holding their water levels and the conditions remain great. Today the Elk was clear with lots of nice holes to hold those wild westslope cutthroats!

During our float we jumped in and out of the boat from time to time to fish some of the nice runs and pocket water. At one point we were quite happy to be in the boat as a black bear was right down on the water. He looked quite chubby and content as it has been a good year for the huckleberries.

The River fished very well today as we caught and released around 45 to 50 cutthroats between the two anglers. The average size was in the 14 to 15 inch class. We were really fortunate to also catch and release a few 17 to 18 inch cuts!

In terms of hatches: October Caddis, Blue Wing Olives and Pale Morning Dunns were all coming off today. In response we used many different flies, but found the most success with the Royal Wulff, Griffin's Gnat and Irresistible - all sized 18 or 20. While we ended up using very small flies, they really produced well!

Just a reminder that the mornings are cool and the afternoons warm, so please remember to dress in layers when you come to fish in the fall.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

**(Report #16, 2005/08/26)**

**The St. Mary River: late summer conditions produce the best day of the season to date!**

Today we were back from the Elk River to do a trip on the St. Mary River. Our float of choice was the 'Pump House to Wycliff' run. It was another beautiful summery August day. The morning started out cool, as per usual of late, but warmed up into the early 80's by afternoon (28 Celsius). The weather has been pretty well perfect this summer, hot but not uncomfortable, with only a little rain sprinkled on top for good measure!

The St. Mary has retained good water depth throughout this season. Many pools are still nice and deep with the cutthroats feeding once the sun hits the water. Today we took advantage of the many nice runs, exiting the boat to fish the most promising braids. This approach provides some good casting practice as one works the shallow water in front and behind the boulders. This type of fishing calls for a lot of casting (roll casting) in tight areas, but it is rewarding.

Today we had one of the best days of the season on the St. Mary River. The fish started feeding at around 10:00 a.m. and continued throughout the day. The average fish landed was in the 15 inch class, but we also caught a number of big healthy fish. In addition to all of the 15's, we caught 5 fish in the 17 to 18 inch slot! In terms of numbers, each angler caught and released 30 to 40 fish. It really was one of those great days on the River, were there was so much action and excitement even the guide had loads of fun.

There was not much of a hatch on the River today with only a few small Caddis and some Blue Winged Olives coming off. But the fish were obviously motivated to eat by something moving down there! In terms of flies, everything was working today, from Ant patterns to H&L Variants, Renegades and Stimulators - sized 12 to 16. It really was one of those special summer days on the River!

Peak Season Views: September and October are probably the two best months for cutthroat fishing on the St. Mary and the Elk rivers. So come on out and fish when the climate is more moderate and the rivers see relatively little fishing pressure. We are the only guide service in Kimberley that holds 'rod days' for both the St. Mary and the Elk rivers, so if you book with us, we can arrange trips to both!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

**(Report #15, 2005/08/25)**

### **The Elk River is in peak summer form!**

Today we floated the bottom section of the Elk River down to Elko which is located west of Fernie B.C. We like the lower stretches of the rivers as they have been fishing very well of late.

The air temperature today started out cool, around 45-50 degrees (8-10 Celsius), but warmed up nicely into the low eighties by mid afternoon (high 20's). It was sunny with very little breeze throughout the day. While we experienced a little rain early in the week, we could see during our ride to the Elk put-in that the moisture had manifested itself as snow on the tops of the Rockies. The first snow of the year on the majestic peaks of the Rockies really is a beautiful sight to see!

The water conditions have held very nicely throughout the summer. The guides have commented on how nice the Elk River has been to float with the water remaining within the optimal floating range and with the fish feeding regularly throughout the hot summer season.

During our float today we were please to encounter fewer anglers than we had experienced a couple of weeks before. We took advantage of the lighter traffic by stopping on the nice long runs and getting out of the boat to fish more or less where we wanted!

On this day, the Elk River fished very well. We started off by using small flies and gradually worker our way up the ladder to bigger stuff as we realized what they we attracted to. We caught a lot of fish in the 13- 15 inch range. The biggest was a nice 18 incher. The fish today were very active, constantly coming to the fly and an angler can't ask for a better opportunity than that.

The hatches of note on the day included some Blue Wing Olives and small Caddis. In addition, we did see a few October Caddis flying around. It really does not take much change in temperature for different insects to emerge and take advantage of it.

On our trip today we used some ant patterns, Royal Wulffs, Caddis Emergers, Yellow Sallys, PMD Sparkle Duns and Stimulators to hook the fish. It was a beautiful day to be on the Elk River, from the snow peaked mountains to the fish attacking the fly.

From Behind the Shop: The guides have been mentioning that both the St. Mary and the Elk rivers are fishing very well of late. The fish are feeding steadily, the catch rates have increased and the fish are now in their prime summer form!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

**(Report #14, 2005/08/19)**

**The Middle of St. Mary River is just fine!**

The middle section of the St. Mary River was our destination today. The weather was beautiful, a warm summer day with temperatures reaching the low to mid to 90's (32-35 Celsius). These days the mornings are starting out quite cool, but warm up nicely as the day progresses. A couple of days ago we had some rain which helped boost and stabilize the water levels a bit. It also cooled the temperature of the land and water down nicely! Since then we have noticed the fish feeding a little more consistently.

Today we mostly floated, fishing the riffles and runs from the boat. On the whole the River produced well. We caught and released about 40 to 50 cutthroats between two anglers. The average size was in the 14 inch range. We did hook one particularly nice cutthroat, a big boy around 18 inches. However, much to our chagrin, it released itself prematurely as it came close to the shore! Doh!

The cooling trend that accompanied the recent rainfall brought with it a Blue Wing Olive hatch. It seems to have caught the fish off guard as usually this time of year it is too hot for a hatch like this!

Once again the traditional patterns were working well including; Red Humpy's, Irresistibles, Parachute Adams, Adams, Renegades, Black Ants and Grass Hoppers. Take your pick, these days everything seems be working pretty well!

Hope you are having a great summer with lots of tight lines!!

See you on the water soon!

**(Report #13, 2005/08/10)**

**The St. Mary River: the water remains stable and cool, and fish active and hungry.**

The 'Pumphouse Run' on the St. Mary River was our stretch of choice on this trip out. The weather today can be described in one word... 'crazy'. We were experiencing a beautiful summer day with temperatures into the high 80's up until around 2:30, then the clouds rolled in. The barometric pressure dropped and we found ourselves in the midst of a huge thunder storm, with lots of rain! As per usual the storm moved across the River and headed towards the Rockies. After our little 'weather interruption' we continued to fish again.

The River continues to hold just fine and with the last couple thunderstorms the water temperature remains cool and the fish are active and feeding well.

As with every summer float we do, we like to encourage anglers to get out of the boat to fish. Our preference for leaving the boat is to arrive at a run, hop out and fish that one for awhile, then jump back in and float to another braid in the river. Sometimes when we hit a run, instead of getting out of the boat we will set anchor and fish a section straight out of the boat. Our pontoon boats provide great access to all types of water that one would have difficult getting to from land or other types of water craft.

Today the St. Mary fished very well up until the thunder storm rolled in. Usually the fishing slows down before the storm, but once it rolls through the water cools down and there is often a hatch that comes off which can really pick up the action. On this trip we did not get that after rain bump in the action, but fortunately prior to the storm we caught and released around 35 fish and ended the day with a nice and chunky 17 inch cutthroat. So we did well none the less.

There were no real significant hatches on the day. That said there were a lot of grasshoppers along the edge and banks of the river and into the adjacent grasslands.

The usual traditional patterns were working for us including: Stimulators, Royal Trudes, Lime Trudes, grasshopper and ant patterns, Parachute Adams and Irresistibles - sized 12 and 14's.

All in all the day went very well, it just got a little wet during the storm! It was a good thing someone packed that rain gear!

Hope to see you on the river soon!

**(Report #12, 2005/08/04)**

**The fish are feeding heavily on the Upper Stretch of the St. Mary.**

Today we were back on the St. Mary as we floated starting from the Lake. Again it was very warm with temperatures reaching the mid 90's. It was very calm in the morning with a nice breeze in the afternoon - not enough to bother our casting, but just enough to cool us down from time to time.

The St. Mary River is holding it's water and the pools are very defined. We are starting to see more rocks in some of the runs, but the fish are holding in their pools and feeding regularly!

We floated a lot today, but we did manage to get out and fish the edges. At lunch the family we were floating, wanted to go for a swim to cool down. So we picked a nice spot and hung out in that area for about an hour and watched the kids swim and eat, while the adults worked the banks further upstream for nice cutthroat.

The fishing today was very good again with the fish feeding heavily on the surface. We caught around 30-40 fish between the group of anglers! The fish averaged around 14 to 15 inches and we caught a few in the 17 inch range. Our biggest fish was a nice fat 18 inch cutthroat! A great day was had by all.

Again. with the warm weather. there was no significant hatch happening during the day, but the fish never stopped feeding on the surface.

We used a lot of different patterns today and they all seemed to work; Royal Trudes, Parachute Adams, Irresistible, Parachute Black Ants, Turk's Tarantula's and Caddis's. Hoppers have been working well too!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

**(Report #11, 2005/07/28)**

**The Bull River is producing well.**

Today we went off the beaten track to the Bull River. The weather was very nice as the temperature reached the high 80's. We walked high along the River and dropped down into the canyon sections to catch some shade and take a shot at this River's wonderful cutthroats. There was very little breeze today as it was a hot and calm summer day in the East Kootenays.

The water conditions on the Bull River are still holding well in terms of level and clarity and the pools are all well formed. So after we parked the truck, we gathered up all our gear and hiked down over the bank and rocks to the River. On this trip, one must be able to climb and have good balance as it takes some walking and exploring to find that perfect fishing hole!

Today the fishing was very good. We caught lots of fish in the 12 to 14 inch range and everyone landed and released 15 to 20 cutthroat. We were using lighter gear with 3 or 4 weight rods, so the fishing was very exciting.

Smaller streams can be a little different to fish. There are way more obstacles to work around. Whether it is the trees and brush coming down to the River, or the large rocks and twigs in the water, there are many things to hinder you from getting that perfect drift. On these small streams one has to cast a lot less line and mend it quickly to make it drift naturally! Of course the bigger cutties like to lay close logs, or behind rocks, which it makes it a little more difficult casting from the shore. But as they say, 'high risk, high reward!'

Grasshoppers are all over the fields now. With the high temperatures, we are seeing very few hatches coming off during the day. However, in the evening the caddis are still coming off steadily. In terms of flies, the dry action was good, with Stimulators, Ant patterns, Lime Trudes and Red Humpies all working well.

View from the Top: Due to the high volume of fishing licenses being sold, the St. Mary Angler is now accepting only cash for licenses - no credit or debit cards please.

**(Report #10, 2005/07/27)**

**The Skookumchuck River; deep, clear and remote!**

Today we made the back country trek into the remote Skookumchuck River. The portion we like to fish is more like a high mountain stream than a river! It was another beautiful day with temperatures reaching 90 degrees (32 Celsius).

We left the fly shop early in the morning and upon arrival far up a logging road we walked for another half hour to one of our favorite spots. The walk is always fun as it allows us to stretch our legs after the drive and think about what lies ahead. The walk under the forest canopy is always one marked with anticipation as we approach a place where the pools are deep, the water is gin clear and no one else is around!

Today the water was clear and at the perfect elevation for this time of year. Usually by the 3rd week of July the water is low enough to fish. Being a high mountain stream, it takes a little longer for the water levels to settle down way up here.

Once we reached the stream we settled down and assembled our rods and readied the paraphernalia. We each eyed a nice pool, moved into position and started casting. The fish were rising readily to the fly and we proceeded to catch a dozen to 15 cutthroat each. The cutthroats have wintered well; they are very healthy looking and strong. We did see a couple of nice 16 inch fish landed, which for a wild cutthroat way up here is very nice indeed.

Grasshoppers are starting to appear out here in pretty good numbers, in addition to the caddis. In turn we used Grasshopper patterns, Lime Trudes, Royal Wulff's and of course the Ant patterns.

Today we had a great day of fishing on top of a fun hike through the forest to a remote piece of paradise. It was a beautiful day of fishing.

Up and over there: The guides have been remarking how much clients improve their dry fly fishing skills after spending a couple days on the rivers... practice makes perfect I say!

Hope to see you on one of the rivers soon!

**(Report #9, 2005/07/26)**

**The St. Mary is rolling along, from top to bottom!**

Of the four sections of the St. Mary River, today we had boats floating all except the top quarter. It was a beautiful, sunny day with temperatures into the mid eighties (29 Celsius). There were a few high clouds drifting about, but they never seemed to get in the way of the sun. It was a calm day, perfect for casting a dry line!

The St. Mary River has been at its optimal level for a while now. The water is holding well and the weather has not been so hot as to cause the tributary creeks to drop much. This freestone river is full of braids and possesses many areas where the fish can hold. Behind big rocks, in log jams, close to the overhanging banks, etc. There is a lot of different river habitat to give the fish cover, thus we are given ample opportunities to cast all day as we try to force them out of the emerald and onto a fly!

When we pull the boat over to exit for a little walking and wading, we always make a concerted effort to fish the area close to the shore first. We are often surprised at how many fish are right under our feet. After working the nearshore area over, we then move out a bit, either up or downstream. This produced good results today.

The fish in the St. Mary can be very opportunistic and don't spook as easily as rainbows or browns. They will regularly take the fly if you get a good drift. Today the fish were coming to the fly all day on all the sections fished! There were a number of big and chunky guys feeding on the surface. A few in the 16 to 17 inch class were hooked, but the real challenge was keeping them on. One boat caught an eastern brown trout along with around 40 cutthroats between the two anglers! All the guides reported the fish were feeding heavily all along the River today.

As mentioned in the previous report on the St. Mary, the Grasshoppers are starting, but they have yet to really emerge as heavily as we expect. There is still a smattering of Caddis and some fluttering Stones, but not really many to speak of.

The most effective dry flies on the day included; Caddis, Green and Red Humpies, Stimulators, and even the Mikulak Sedge was working well.

It was a great day all along the St. Mary. We hope to see you on the River soon!

**(Report #8, 2005/07/24)**

**The Elk River has settled in for the summer!**

Today we were off to fish a couple sections of the Elk River. It was another beautiful day as the temperatures hovered around the low 80's (high 20's Celsius). This sunny and warm weather is perfect summer conditions for fishing as it is not too hot, or muggy, and certainly not too cool. In addition to the clarity and warmth, there was no wind apart from a light breeze from time to time. According to The Weather Network, B.C. is the best place to be right now as our weather has been perfect compared with the rest of the country

The Elk River has now reached its optimum fishing level. We can see that many new runs have appeared and the water is crystal clear. Again we floated most of the day, pulling aside at many of the runs to fish. We stopped on a few occasion at the more productive runs where we spent a half hour or so walking up and down the bank edges drifting the dry flies.

Today the fish were hungry and active and everyone caught and released many fish! The average length was 14 inches, but we also saw a few beauties in the 17 inch category! The day seemed to fly by and by the end of it we were looking to rest the casting arm and go and enjoy whatever Kimberley has to offer.

The grasshoppers have now come on strong, but we also noticed a lot of ants and caddis coming off. Hoppers, Lime Trudes, Royal Wulffs all seemed to be working well as the fish were very hungry today!

A great time was had by all, hope to see you on the River soon.

**(Report # 7, 2005/07/20)**

### **The St. Mary has found its summer groove!**

Today we floated the St. Mary from just below the headwater Lake down to our private take out. This stretch of the River feels a little different from the lower sections. It has trees and thick vegetation right down to the water line and it feels like you are deep in the back country. On the lower stretches the River grows in volume, widens out into a flood plain, and we see different, drier vegetation patterns.

Things are really warming up to summer norms in terms of temperature. Today we reached 86 degrees (30 Celsius). It was hot and sunny with no wind, a beautiful day to be on the River! In terms of the water level, it is as if someone 'turned off the tap' on the St. Mary River. The River has dropped into its 'summer groove' and is holding steadily in place. The water clarity has reached 'crystal clear' status according to the guides.

As the weather and water temperatures are reaching summer conditions, we did a fair bit of walking and wading today, in addition to floating. It is warm enough that we could get away with no waders today as we stripped down to shirts, shorts and felt soled boots. The upper section provided us with many opportunities to throw the fly into prime water. As long as we achieved a good drift with no drag on the fly, we had no trouble hooking up the fish.

The action today was very good. We caught and released over 30 fish. The biggest cutthroat - we managed to keep on the line - was around 16 to 17 inches. We saw quite a few of these chubby guys on the upper part of the trip. Using the 4 or 5 weight rod makes the hook-up and fight of these guys very exciting! You can use a 3 or 4X leader and tippet on these fish, as they see little angling pressure they are not 'leader shy'.

The dominant hatch on the trip was the Caddis. We also noticed that the Stone flies are getting close to the end of their cycle and grass hoppers are just starting to come on stream. The march of nature's creatures progresses as we move into summer.

With the emergence of the hoppers, we used them in sizes 10-14. We also used Caddis, Ant patterns and traditional flies such as H&L Variants, Royal Wulffs, Trudes and Stimulators. Today we had great weather, scenery and fishing! Put the word out, summer on the St. Mary has arrived!

Advice in Advance: Before you leave home to come fish with us, please make sure you check our "What to Bring" list to ensure you have all the essentials!

Looking forward to seeing you on the water!

**(Report # 6, 2005/07/16)**

**The Elk River: when it rains it pours!**

Today we were off to fish the lower section of the Elk River again. The weather was okay at the start, but by 1:00 p.m. the rain and clouds rolled in and it poured! By 3:00 in afternoon the rain slowed down and our perseverance was rewarded with some good fishing. The temperature on the day hovered in the low to mid 60's (17 to 19 Celsius).

The water clarity remains somewhat opaque, but that does not really seem to matter as long as we have a few feet of visibility. The water levels continue to come down and the pools are forming nicely.

The morning was somewhat slow, followed by the deluge. However, after the rain the hatches were coming off steadily. The fish responded with a lot of activity. Most of the fish caught and released were around 15 inches. However, we did land some in the 16 to 17 inch slot as well. While the day started slowly it ended strong as we released around 30 fish.

The cutthroats we have been catching so far this year are very fit and seem to be a little chunky for this early in the season. All of the rain this spring seems to have really boosted the whole ecology of the system - especially on the terrestrial side. As a result, we are seeing a lot of food on the water and the subsequent result is more hefty fish!

In terms of insect activity observed during our float, both Pale Morning Dunns and Caddis flies were hatching pretty well after the rain. Some Green Drakes were also hatching, but we expect with the recent run of hotter weather, they will now start to slow a bit along with the Stone flies. We expect them to be replaced by the many other types of insects who will take their turn filling their various ecological niches across the summer.

With respect to the flies we tried; Stimulators, Royal Wulf's, Royal Trudes, Ants and various Caddis patterns all which seemed to work! When there is so much food on the water we tend to use a lot of flies hoping one will be better than the next.

Hope to see you on the river soon!

**(Report # 5, 2005/07/12)**

### **The Elk is high, but ready to go!!**

The Elk River was our destination today. The day started off with beautiful skies and the temperatures topped out in the early 80's (28 Celsius). As is often the case on the Elk, the wind gusts picked up from time to time challenging our casting skills.

The Elk is still quite high, but is coming down with pools starting to appear and nice runs beginning to form. The Elk River never really clears up like the St. Mary, but as we have found out over the years, it can still fish very well in these conditions.

Today we floated the lower sections of the River. We did hop out of the boat in a few spots to fish the runs. The Elk River is somewhat different from the St. Mary as the fish do not tend to hold in the areas of the run that you would suspect. They like to fool anglers and hold in uncommon places. Maybe this is because the Elk sees a lot of angling pressure and the fish have become a little more 'educated'.

The wind made for a more challenging day, but we still managed to bring 15 cutthroats to the boat. They were all in the 14 to 15 inch class and were nice and thick looking fish. The fish in the Elk River tend to be a little more plump than on the St. Mary, must be from all that food we see on the water!

Speaking of food, Stone and Caddis flies were all over the Elk on this day and we also observed the beginning of a Green Drake hatch. There was lots of food on the water, so we tried a number of different varieties of flies including; Stone flies, Black Ant patterns, Orange and Yellow Stimulators, Royal and Lime Trudes and Adams patterns - all were sized 12 to 14. We like to keep changing the fly, even when one is working so-so. If you limit yourself to only a couple of flies on these types of days, you are unlikely to find that exact type of food that they are keying on amongst all the other stuff that is bobbing along in the water.

This and That: Make sure you have a good pair of polarized sunglasses with you as they come in very handy. Any edge an angler can get is important when fishing. Polarized sunglasses will not only protect your eyes from the glare on the water, but allow you to scan the water effectively for cruising fish!!

See you on the water soon!

**(Report # 4, 2005/07/11)**

### **Great summertime fun on the St. Mary!**

Today we floated the middle section of the River amid summer temperatures. We had a couple of overcast moments, but the skies were mostly clear with temperatures in the high 70's (26 + Celsius) with virtually no wind. It was a very pleasant day to be out on the water stalking the hungry cuts.

The St. Mary remains clear and the water levels continue to drop on their way to summer norms. This really is a fun time of year, not only because we are so eager to get out, but because the back channels remain a great place for fish to hold. In a couple of more weeks the channels will have mostly disappeared and the fish will have moved into their mainstem lies. In the meantime, we know where they are and take every opportunity to stop the boat and fish the most promising back channels!

In terms of equipment, we used our dry gear - lines and flies - and used plenty of floatant to ensure the flies stayed on top. The fish love it when the fly looks like it is stranded on the water, so getting a good drift is also critical in fooling these fish! Remember to let the fish eat the fly before trying to set the hook. It is easy to get so excited by the sight of one of the big guys approaching your fly that you pull it right out from under his nose before he even touches it!

On this day, the River fished great. Both of the groups did very well. Many 15 inchers, as well as a few 'fat boys' in the 17 inch range were caught and released. One of the bigger fish was 'cut-bow' hybrid at round 17 inches. The colors of these fish are very rich and beautiful and they sure go crazy once hooked up! The biggest fish of the day, which was caught by a young lad, was a 20 inch bull trout. This fish seemed to be chasing a small cutthroat, but settled on the fly. Quite a surprised for angler and fish alike! All in all it was quite an eventful day.

Stone and caddis flies were coming off in quite a big hatch. We fished with Royal Wulfs, Royal Trudes, Caddis Stimulators and a few Stone fly patterns - sizes spanned from 8 to 12.

Over and Under: Be careful if you do decide to float the St. Mary on your own at this time of year. We have already heard of two rafts rolling over, in addition to a couple of canoes going south. All of the incidents occurred in the upper stretch of the River just down from St. Mary Lake. There are also a number of log jams in the River that you must be aware of before you start out, so be careful! Our guides are very experienced and use inflatable boats so you are safe with us!

Hope to see you on the river soon!

**(Report # 3, 2005/07/01)**

### **The St. Mary has settled in for Canada Day!**

Today we took to the lower third of the St. Mary River. As you regulars know, this section of the River travels in such a way that it feels like you are floating right into the Rockies! Along with the spectacular view, we were greeted by a beautiful early summer day as the temperature hovered around 24 to 26 degrees Celsius (75 - 79 F.) with an occasional breeze. During the float we encountered a mix of sun and cloud, perfect conditions for cutthroat trout feeding!

The St. Mary River is now crystal clear and dropping on a daily basis. The spring freshet is complete and the only water feeding the system is the groundwater that was bolstered by the rain we experienced in June. While we did not have a heavy snow pack this past winter, the sizable spring rains seemed to have raised the amount of groundwater significantly enough that it should keep the river levels from dipping too low later in the season.

Today we floated the River, choosing to pull over and stop in some areas so we could get out to try our luck up the back channels. Some of the channels remain pretty wide with the fish preferring to hold in the center of these bigger 'pools'. In terms of the mainstem of the River itself, until we get into summer flows the fish will tend to hold close to the edge of the shore. So today we focused our casting close to the shore as we floated along. You just need to get the fly to float naturally with a great big mend and the fish will come and gobble it up. It takes a little practice to master this simple technique, but on a float trip you will have plenty of opportunities to get the hang of it as there are fish around every bend, and in pretty well every riffle and run.

Today the St. Mary fished great as we caught and released 30 nice cutthroats in the 14 to 15 inch slot. We did have a chance at a couple of nasty 17 to 18 inch beauties, but, we never quite managed to wrestle them in!

Stone flies, Yellow Sallys and some Caddis flies were hatching on the River. We also noticed a few Green Drakes coming off as well. We responded with a series of dry flies including: Stimulators - Royal and Yellow sized 10 and 12, Royal Wulffs, sized 12 and 14, as well as Lime Trudes, Stone flies and Yellow Sallys all sized 12 to 14.

Overall this trip was outstanding for early in the season and of course we were the only ones on the River this Canada Day. It is nice to have the whole River to yourself from time to time!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

Upstream/Downstream: If you have questions about the new classified waters system being implemented on the rivers of the East Kootenays, go to Kootenay Angling Guides Association website or call the flyshop at 1-800-667-2311.

**(Report # 2, 2005/06/26)**

**The freshet has peaked, the weather has broken, and the rivers are starting to settle down!**

After a couple of weeks of cloudy and rainy spring weather, things are starting to warm up in the East Kootenays. Over the last few weeks the rivers have been running high as the spring freshet works its way through the system. The temperatures have been hanging around 20-22 Celsius (68-72 F), but a couple of days ago it rose to a 'summer like' 32 C (90F) marking a significant change in the weather.

The water conditions remain pretty high. That said, levels have reached their zenith and are starting to clear as they come down. As always, the St. Mary River benefits greatly from the buffering effect provided by its headwater Lake. We expect the rivers to start rounding into fishable form next week.

Even though conditions are still 'spring like' we took a couple of our Marivia Rafts out for a float on the St. Mary to check things out. It is always nice to get out early to see how the freshet has resorted the gravel and sediments and where it has altered the riffles and runs. In terms of the fish, the cutthroats have just finished spawning and are slowly starting to move toward their summer lies as the river settles down. We did toss a few flies into the side channels and did manage to hook a few cutthroats in the 14 to 15 inch class. We also were surprised to catch a nice sized bull trout that stretched out to around 24 inches. The fishing was all a bonus as we were really out there just to see how much things have changed this spring.

In terms of hatches on the St. Mary, we observed some Lime and Yellow Sallys coming off, as well as the beginning of the Golden Stonefly activity for the spring. Given the activity, we fished with Lime and Yellow Sallys, Golden Stones, as well as Royal Wulffs and Lime Trudes.

It was great to get out and gauge the mood and temperament of the St. Mary River early in the season. The catch and release of the cutthroat and the big bull were an excellent compliment to the thrill of just getting out on the River again.

Hope to see you on the river soon.

Upstream/Downstream: We have just found out that when you buy a classified waters angling license for the Elk or St. Mary rivers, the license includes the right to fish all the tributaries of that river for that day. This is good news as it allows you fish the Elk in the morning and then go and fish one of the tribs later on in the afternoon. If you have questions about the new classified waters system, go to Kootenay Angling Guides Association website or call the flyshop at 1-800-667-2311.

**(Report # 1, 2005/06/01)**

### **Spring is here, so let the games begin!**

It is June 1st and we are off to fish at Premier Lake as the ice is off the water and spring is here again. Premier Lake Provincial Park is located up the valley from our flyshop in Kimberley B.C. This Park has great camping facilities and is a wonderful place to go with family, or a group of friends keen to spar with Premier's rainbow trout.

In terms of the weather, June can be rainy. True to form a system did move into the East Kootenay's bringing with it showers, cloud and a touch of wind today. Prior to these past few days we have had wonderful spring weather with lots of sun and warm temperatures. The highs have been reaching a comfortable 24 to 26 degrees Celsius (75-80 Fahrenheit). Today the temperature hovered around 18 to 19 degrees (64-66).

The Lake has been clear for a while now and we can see to the bottom. In some places along the edges we can also see that beautiful emerald color that comes from the glacier flour washing off the mountains. When fishing this time of year a little breeze is not necessarily a hindrance, and the cooler weather system coming in did not detract from the fishing at all. As a matter of fact, the cooling trend of the last few days has seemed to pick things up a bit.

Our choice of floatation device was our pontoon boats and we fished primarily along the edges of the Lake. Premier has many perfect little drop off ledges where we stopped, dropped anchor, and with back to the wind, cast into depths. We were casting a dry line with a 9 to 18 foot length of leader and tippet topped with a chironomid. Other options for fishing this body of water include cruising along the edges with a damsel in tow, or trolling with a wet line and leech or a full back. Regardless of the method, all will produce good results when the conditions are right for that technique!

Premier Lake has generally been fishing very well in the last few weeks. On this day the two of us caught about 20 fish in a half day of fishing. All but one fell into 15-18 inch slot. However, we were fortunate to catch one rainbow that topped out at just over 19 inches!

In terms of flies, we fished chironomids quite a bit as they tend to make up about 80% of the trout's diet at this time of year. The hatches have been very heavy the last couple of weeks. As June progresses we will see more and more food on the water and with it a greater and greater selection for the fish to consume. In terms of specific chironomids we cast on the day, we used snowcones and chromies. We also tried with some success, egg sucking leeches and halfbacks. While we had a lot of fun on the day we were sorry to have missed the recent black ant hatch which can be quite the experience.

Upstream/Downstream: Just a reminder that most of the lakes opened on May 1st. However, some open as soon as the ice is off, so it is best to check your Regulations well in advance of your trip. If you are interested in knowing more about the changes going on with respect to the reclassification on some of the rivers in southeastern British Columbia, please check out the Kootenay Angling Guides Association website for all the details. You can expect more regular fishing reports now that the lakes are open and we have finally finished the move into our new flyshop location across the street from the old one.

Take care and great fishing!