

ST.MARY ANGLER FLY SHOP

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2007 Season in Review

Last winter left us with just over the long term average amount of snow that we usually get. This meant the rivers of the East Kootenay region of British Columbia started out with enough water for a good spring freshet. The runoff started in early May, was in high gear by the third week and had peaked by early June. Rainfall throughout the season was mostly below average after June. The daily temperatures were normal, except for July when it was warmer than the long term average. This left us with many hot, clear, beautiful days throughout the season. The combination of lower rainfall and increased temperatures meant our rivers were O.K. in terms of flows, but the guides did have to get out to walk the boats over the odd shallow ledge come September.

Rainfall:

Month	June	July	August	September
Long Term Average Monthly Rainfall	52.7 millimetres	38.2 mm	31.6 mm	27.3 mm
Rainfall in 2007	60.8 mm	18 mm	10 mm	12 mm

Temperature:

Month	June	July	August	September
Long Term Average Daily High Temperature	21.6 C	25.6 C	25.4 C	19.6 C
Temperature in 2007	22.1 C	31.4 C	26.3 C	19.7 C

By May 15th we had already been fishing our favourite alpine lakes for a couple of weeks. We experienced a lot of beautiful spring weather and White Swan and Premier lakes produced some spectacular results as we fished chironomids and took in the annual massive hatch of flying ants. We landed and released many bright rainbows in the 14 to 16 inch range, as well as bigger beauties in the order of 17+ inches. We had plenty of fun manoeuvring our pontoon boats amongst the tight lines on these picturesque bodies of water. By early June we were keen to hit the rivers for some dry fly fishing.

By mid-June the St.Mary was fishable and by early July we were taking clients out on both the St.Mary and the Elk rivers. As always the freshet had redistributed many millions of tons of river sediment and removed a number of riparian trees. The result was the creation of a few new sand and gravel bars here

and there, and the removal of others in different areas. On June 30th we guided our first float down the St. Mary River and on July 2nd we hosted our first guests on the Elk. The temperature was already hanging around the early 80's F. and the fishing was surprisingly good early on. During our first trip out on the Elk the two anglers caught and released around 50 fish. Most were in the 14 -15 inch range, but we did land a few of those chunky 17 inchers! So the season started out on the right foot.

During the month of July the fish found their summer grooves as the rivers settled in to their new surroundings. By the end of the first week the St. Mary was fishing very well. Each hole and riffle was producing hungry cutthroats. Many were in the average slot of 14 to 15 inches, and we were fortunate to land some gorgeous 17-18 inch cuts. The anglers were also experiencing good catch rates by this time. The dominant hatches were Golden Stones and Yellow Sallys. By the third week we noticed the yellow and brown hoppers active in the adjacent fields signalling the move to terrestrials. By the last week of July the Elk was in prime form. Cutthroats were coming to the surface to take our flies with great regularity. The average size released was 15 inches, anglers were catching 20-25 cutthroats each, we were landing fish as large as 18 inches and the grasshoppers were everywhere!

We started August with a trek to the beautiful Bull River. There is very little fishing pressure over there so the trout were ripe for the fooling! As soon as we unloaded a few good casts where the fly was allowed to drift down through the feed lane, the trout were on it right of way. This produced a lot of fun and excitement as each angler caught and released around 20 fish in the 12-14 inch class. We also pulled in a few lovely 16 inch cutthroats. At the end of the day the anglers commented on how their arms felt spent and what a good feeling that was!

After the Bull, it was onto the Skookumchuck River with her unique remote setting and ability to produce all kinds of fish within a scenic backdrop that is just breathtaking. Meanwhile the St. Mary was fishing very well with good catch rates and some big fish showing up. One angler managed to release four 17+ inch cuts during one float. The grasshoppers were providing plenty of feed by mid August as they were pretty well omnipresent. By the third week of August the hatches on the Elk also included Blue Winged Olives, Green Drakes and even the odd stone fly. The fishing on the Elk remained strong with plenty of chunky cuts testing the line of our anglers. The weather remained good for the month with hot days and clear skies. The temperatures started cooling off in the mornings as we approached the last week of August.

By the end of the first week of September the weather was cool enough that we were wearing waders in the mornings. Given the rain this summer was half of the normal amount we usually get, we were noticing the effect on the rivers. That said, the Elk continued to fish well as we caught a lot of nice, big, healthy looking fish in September. As the locals moved from fishing to hunting pursuits and the vacationing kids took their parents back home for school, we had the rivers pretty well to ourselves.

By mid September on the St. Mary we were noticing the mornings were fishing a little slower, while the afternoons produced well. At the same time the October Caddis were coming out of their cocoons and hatching. This left the cuts with their last opportunity to really gorge themselves before winter and they took full advantage of it! This left us the chance to catch many of these fat fish. Their stomachs were big and round as they keyed on the huge number of October Caddis. Late in the month they got the added bonus of a big Blue Winged Olive hatch which neither they, nor us, passed up!

We continued to fish into early October catching some really nice sized fish on the Elk and St. Mary rivers. Sure the water levels were low and the mornings were cool, but the place was empty and the fishing was very exciting! Fall really is a great time to fish out here!

So there you have it. 2007 was another great year on the St. Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck rivers. The weather was consistently sunny and clear, as the rain stayed away a little more than usual. The season started on time, the rivers produced well throughout, and finished very strong. We had a wonderful year of fishing and greatly enjoyed and appreciated your patronage. We hope to see you next year and are booking 2008 trips now. We will be attending tradeshows this winter and hope to see you there! Have a safe winter and don't hesitate to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to chat about next year's available days.

Take care,



Kelly Laatsch, St. Mary Angler Fly Shop.

2007 FISHING REPORTS

(Report #1, 2007/05/15)

The lakes are open and fishing very well!!

We have been fishing our favourite lakes of the East Kootenay's, mainly White Swan and Premier, for a couple of weeks now. We have been experiencing beautiful spring weather with all the leaves bursting and the flowers starting to bloom. Temperatures are inching up everyday with things in the 20-24 degree Celsius range this week (68-75°F). While on the lakes, the wind has been pretty steady in the morning, but by later in the afternoon things have been calming right down making it real nice from late afternoon into the early evening. Both lakes have turned over and the levels are building, but normal, as the spring freshet has definitely begun. The water is clear - just right for fishing.

During the last two weeks chironomid fishing has been spectacular as this is the most prominent food in the water. About 80% of the trout's diet consists of the wide range of chironomids that inhabit these waters. Did you know that there are almost 2500 different types? This early season we have also been observing scuds, leeches and shrimp in the diet as the fish slowly make their way to the shallows to feast on the abundant chironomid hatches.

The most productive way of fishing at this time consists of pulling big patterns on the bottom by using a wet line and trolling. Another option which can be equally effective is to 'chironomid fish' which entails using a dry line and running a long leader around 15 to 20 feet. We just anchor along a drop off ledge with back to the wind and cast toward the deep water letting the chironomid sink. By observing the movement of the indicator we can see and feel the big rainbows when they hit the fly and we are off to an exciting fight with these healthy fish! The lakes have been fishing fabulous with Premier being just a touch above the rest.

As you have figured from the description above, the chironomids have been hatching steadily, but we just had our annual big hatch of flying ants as the weather has taken us into that zone.

Pulling leeches, damsels, full backs and half backs has been very effective. In addition, the snowcone chironomid has been most effective. On the surface, flying ant patterns have been excellent during the recent hatch so we have been blessed with a lot options these last few weeks. As you can see the fish are hungry and out feeding steadily.

The rivers of southeastern B.C. are now closed until June 15th because of spring run off and cutthroat spawning. Yes the rivers are in full runoff mode as we speak. This early but strong freshet could mean some fabulous early river fishing once everything, and I mean the millions of tons of sand and gravels, have been sorted out in the river channels.

We are looking forward to a great fishing season and hope to see you on the water this summer!

(Report #2, 2007/05/27)

High Water and Abundant Hatches Dominate on Premier Lake.

Sunday was our day for a trip to Premier Lake. The weather was, in a word, "crazy". The rain came and went all day long, but we managed to stay out there for most of it. While the rain refused to leave for long, there was absolutely no wind on the day. This lack of wind was a Godsend to us as we were fishing long leaders on this trip.

The lake level is now at the high end as runoff from the mountains is really pouring in. However, the water remains clear. Today we basically stayed with the chironomid style of fishing; anchoring on the drop-off ledges and casting long leaders into the abyss.

We used many different patterns to see what they would take and what was not on the menu. Over the course of the day, Premier fished very well. We noticed a lot of the bigger fish moving out from the shallows so we were left to catch more of smaller guys in the 14-16 inch range. That said, we did manage to catch a couple bigger beau's in the order of 17+ inches. Between the 2 anglers, 20 fish were caught. Things have definitely calmed down from the frenzy of a week ago when the chironomids were hatching like crazy, but the fishing was still pretty good on the Lake.

As May comes to an end there is a lot more food on the water and the fish are keying on certain types. Chironomids are still hatching, but they are now accompanied by damsel flies and an assortment of May flies.

So what worked on the day you ask? May Fly patterns such as Copper Johns, Lightening Bugs, as well as leech patterns, Woolly Buggers, Damsels (along the edges) and chironomids all worked well. The trick to success was to keep changing things around till we found out what was working best for that time of the day.

Rivers Watch:

The St. Mary and Elk rivers are in full runoff as the weather continues to heat up and burn the snow pack off the mountains. We can't really get too close, but from our 'rubber tire reconnaissance' it looked like the freshet is in full gear. We always like to see it come and go as early as possible!

The fishing season looks to be shaping up as a good one and we hope to see you up in our neck of the woods this summer. Check out our new St. Mary Angler Guest House for an alternate place to stay.

Take care,

Karen and Kelly

(Report #3, 2007/06/17)

While the St. Mary is fishable, it is not yet guidable!

Today we took our first St. Mary River reconnaissance trip of the season. We floated the St. Mary from Wycliffe to the take-out at Fort Steele. Because of the high velocity of the water we are able to float two of the four sections of the River in a day with ease.

The weather on this day was overcast with rain on and off. It was definitely spring weather, but it felt great to be back on the River! The water was high, but continues to drop every day, normal for this stage of the freshet. The water clarity was fair for this time of year at 2 to 3 feet. On the journey we encountered many fallen trees along the riparian zone as the River continues the process of renewal - undercutting here, and building over there. We noticed a fair amount of debris on the water, as well as some new areas of accretion which caused the River to change its flow from time to time. It was nature at its best, I guess that is why they say not to build on the flood plain!

Because of the robust nature of the River at this time of year, we fish it a little different than in the summer months. Today we fished quite a bit from the boat and casted towards the bank edges where the fish tend to hug at this time of year. We also pulled over a few times and walked up some of the back channels and fished them like they were small creeks!

At this point, the river is fishable, but not guidable. We did catch a few nice cutthroats - the average size in the 14 to 15 inch class. We managed to catch and release 5 to 6 each. The cutthroats looked very healthy and in great shape so we have great expectations for the upcoming season

In terms of hatches, Golden Stones are emerging, as well as a few caddis in the evening. We also spied the odd Yellow Sally and a few Pale Morning Duns. We fished dry flies only; the attractor patterns always work well at this time of year. Stone flies, (Stimulators - yellow and orange), Chernobyl Ants and Lime/Royal Trudes were our flies of choice.

Lake Update: The lakes are still fishing very good, particularly White Swan and Premier. Both are Provincial Parks with great camping for you early season campers out there. The Elk River and the tributary streams are still in full runoff mode.

The St. Mary Angler Fly Shop is now open daily. Feel free to drop us a line about available days at 1-800-667-2311.

Take care and good fishing!

Kelly and Karen

(Report #4, 2007/06/26)

The St. Mary is fishable, so here we go again!

Today we headed out to the St. Mary River for our final 'dry-run' of the season as tomorrow it is for real. We floated from the Pumhouse all the way to the Mission. It was a beautiful sunny early summer day with very little breeze and a warm temperature of around 28 degrees C (82°F). We even did a little waderless (wet) wading as it was warm enough with only our quick drying pants and felt boots between us and the water.

The River is definitely starting to come down. We have 4 to 5 feet of visibility now. While the water is still high - normal for this time of year - it looks good. It really makes one want to pick up the fly rod and head on out to any river and start casting that dry fly!

The St. Mary River is a dry fly fishery. In the Regulations it is deemed a 'Fly Fish Only' stream where one is not allowed to use a strike indicator, or weight on the line. Any weight has to be tied into the fly pattern - so there are no conehead or beadhead flies allowed. Fortunately for you and me, the dry fly fishing is spectacular and the cutthroats just love to take the fly on the surface!

As today was a test day, we basically floated to the best looking sections and began casting dry's to the unsuspecting cutthroats. In our effort to see a lot of water, we did not linger and only worked each run for a short time. That said, we were lucky to turn fish at every stop! We caught about 15 fish each averaging 14 inches. In addition, we did bring one nice cutthroat to the boat - at nice, chunky, 17 incher. The fish looked as if they have wintered well and now are hungry and aggressive. We suspect the spawning is just about over and the cuts are moving back into the main stem of the River where they are starting to eye up their summer feeding stations.

Yellow Sally's, Lime Trudes, and of course the big stone flies were the dominant hatches. Oh, ya, Caddis flies were also showing well in the evening. We like to use big attractor patterns on the St. Mary River and everyone that has been with us for a float knows what the guides love to use. For example, today we liked the Turk Tarantulas, Yellow and Orange Stimulators, Chernobyl Ants (sized 10 and 12), Yellow Sally's, Royal and Lime Trudes and Caddis (sized 12 and 14).

Downstream: We will be floating the Elk River this weekend - Canada Day is July 1st -and we will have a report on that trip. We have heard from the fly shops in Fernie that the Elk is producing fish, but it is still high and pretty cloudy. The St. Mary River is now guidable and from now until July 5th, we have a reduced rate of \$399.00 for 1 or 2 people (1 boat). As always, we include our world famous lunch in the package! We have our first group of guided clients out tomorrow from Wisconsin. They

seemed very excited to be the first fishers to break in the St. Mary River in 2007.

Hope to see you on the River soon!

(Report #5, 2007/06/30)

The St. Mary is clear and lots of fun on our first trip out!

Today we guided our first float of the season down the St. Mary River. We floated from The Mission to Fort Steele on this beautiful, sunny day. The temperature was around 28 degrees C (82°F), with only a slight breeze in the afternoon to moderate this hot summer day.

The St. Mary River is giving us about 4 to 5 feet of visibility now and the water depth is dropping with every hot day we experience. It is still running a bit high, but we are starting to see the debris line that has formed along the top of the bank so we are definitely on the down side of things.

Once again we dry fly fished, getting out of the boat to work the back channels where many cutthroats are lurking at this time. This approach allowed us to fish from the shore quite a bit, then jump back into the boat and float down to another great spot once we had worked things over.

Most of the fish released today fell in the 10 to 12 inch range, but we did catch 2 large fish that broke the 16 inch barrier. The client caught and released around 15 fish which was pretty good since he had never really fly-fished before. So the fish are definitely starting to look up and feed aggressively when the fly is presented properly.

In terms of hatches, the Golden Stone flies are hatching and moving upstream from the Kootenay River. The Caddis and Yellow Sally's are also showing well. Today we fished with Yellow and Orange Stimulators, Caddis, Lime Trudes and Chernobyl Ants.

Planning Ahead:

Make sure you check the fishing regulations before you come as a few of our Region 4 rivers are now "classified". This means you are required to have a special license to fish these streams. We are hoping that licensing system will be available on-line come September so in the future you will be able to get everything in advance of your trip.

(Report #6, 2007/07/2)

The Elk River is ready to go!

Today we decided to head over to the Elk River to check it out. We floated one of the two lower sections of the River and the weather was absolutely beautiful. As usual the Elk had a little wind blowing upstream, but not enough to bother our casting. The temperature reached upwards of 29 C (84°F). It was some of the nicest weather of the season to date, perfect for our Canada Day long weekend.

While the weather was hot, the Elk River itself is still very cool so we had to wear our waders for the in's and out's of the day. The River is still quite high, but there is about 3 to 4 feet of visibility and it is dropping daily with the hot weather. Our spring freshet was pretty good for us this year as it was small and it did not come all at once, so we saw limited flooding and an early start to the season.

Today we decided to only dry fly fish and that turned out to be a ton of fun. To our benefit, the fish were up and feeding on the surface in many of the runs. We just had to find the fly they wanted and they would come ripping out of the water to grab it. We noticed some of the fish would swim under the fly to check it out and either take it, or pass on by. It was cool to watch the whole thing unfold.

We fished close to the bank edges - around and beside logs and rocks - every area where we thought the cutthroats were holding. This year we are noticing the River has some new log jams in some areas and in other areas they are now disappeared. All this means new channels cut and old ones filled in.

In terms of the fishing, the two of us caught and released about 15 fish each. Our approach was to bring up a couple of fish in an area, then jump back into the boat and moved downstream to check out another spot. We caught many fish in the 13 to 14 inch slot, as well as a few nice and chunky fellas in the 16 inch range!

There were a lot of hatches on the Elk River today. It was almost like every section was hatching a different type of bug. Golden Stone flies were hatching, as well as Yellow Sally's, Caddis and some Green Drakes.

We found that the Stimulators - Orange and Yellow - body size 12 and 14 were working, as well as caddis, size 12 and 14. We tried Royal Wulff's, H&L Variants, Blue Wing Olives and Black Ant patterns. Most of the flies we used brought up at least one fish. All in all it was a very fun day and the Elk River is definitely guidable!"

Around the Bend:

Come and check out the Kimberley area if you like to golf and fish. We have many championship golf courses, as well as spectacular dry fly fishing. Combine the two together and spend a few days in the Great Canadian Rockies.

Take care and good fishing.

(Report #7, 2007/07/5)

The Elk River is sizzling hot with fishing action, wildlife, as well as the temperature!

Today we headed back over to the Elk River as it has been fishing fabulously. We floated one of the two lower sections amidst hot, dry weather. Today it tipped the Toledo's at 36C or 97°F. We slathered on the sunscreen, but left the waders behind... summer is definitely here!

The water is dropping as the hot summer days have gripped us. We now have about five feet of water visibility. While there is still a lot of the water in the runs, things have dropped enough so we can see the gravel on the River bottom, typical for this stage of the year. The River is now flowing evenly with nice runs, riffles and pocket water forming.

Today we did a combination float/wade trip. Given the Elk has some nice spots where we can get out of the boat and cast to the lurking cutthroats along the banks and in nice pools, we took advantage of it. The result was some spectacular dry fly fishing! As long as we had the right bug on the line, many fish were rising for it. The cutthroats are in great condition - very nice and chunky this year with very bright red slashes under the mouth - healthy looking fish indeed.

We did very well today catching and releasing around 50 cutthroats between the two anglers. Most were in the 14 -15 inch range, but we did land a few of those chunky 17 inchers! In addition to the fish, the wildlife was in full view as we saw a number of young bucks sporting their new velvet antlers. The bird life was also exceptional along the trip as many birds were singing and feeding on the different hatches of the River. We even experienced a couple osprey diving and catching fish right in front of us! On the drive over we even saw two big horned sheep on the side of the river bank with their two baby Billy's. What a day for experiencing and viewing nature!

Today the Golden Stones were hatching again, as well as Yellow Sally's, Caddis and some small midges. In response to this activity we used Royal Wulff's, Royal Trudes and H&L Variants (14 and 16). We are seeing the Orange and Yellow Stimulators working well (12 and 14). Chernobyl Ants (brown, orange or yellow) size 10 and 12 got good results. Lime Trudes (12, 14 or 16) and Turk's Tarantula (10 and 12) were also casted. We used Blue Winged Olives to match the small midges that

were hatching, with good success.

What a wonderful day on the River it was! Tomorrow we are on the St. Mary River so stay tuned for a Mary Report.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #8, 2007/07/11)

The St. Mary River is forming up well and providing us with excellent fishing!

Today we floated from the Mission down to the mouth of the Kooteney River at the Fort Steele takeout. This trip down the St. Mary River was part of another very hot day with temperatures reaching around 35 degrees Celsius (95°F). It is now nice and hot in the Canadian Rockies!

The flow of the St. Mary River is dropping very nicely and the runs and riffles are starting to form up well. The River looks to be in great shape, but then again as a wild river that is allowed to renew itself each spring freshet, that is to be expected. We are now at the stage where the River has settled down enough that we do not have to float a double leg, so we are concentrating on regular single section floats of one of the four runs.

As per usual we decided to get out of the boat quite a bit and fish the pools and riffles from shore. We really enjoy walking the bank edges and casting that dry fly down the seam line where the fish like to sit and sip their lunch.

On the day the St. Mary fished very well. Each hole and riffle produce a hungry cutthroat. Many were in the average slot of 14 to 15 inches, but we were also fortunate to lure a few 17-18 inch cutthroats to our fly. Cutthroats tend to feed aggressively and when they are deep in the water looking up into that feed lane, but you must present the fly and mend it correctly so it floats naturally down the seam. Then with any luck the cutthroat will like your bug and shoot upwards to grab it. On this float the anglers landed around 50 cutthroats between them, a very productive day indeed.

The dominant hatches on this run included Golden Stones and Yellow Sallys. In terms of flies, we used Yellow and Orange Stimulators (12 and 14) with good success. We also tossed Royal and Lime Trudes, Royal Wulffs, Grey Wulffs, H&L Variants (12 and 14) in addition to Orange and Yellow Chernobyl Ants (10 and 12).

Looking Ahead:

For a little variety, we will be heading up to the Bull River in a week or so to check it out. We are expecting the water to be down and the fishing to be great!

Hope to see you on the river soon!

(Report #9, 2007/07/23)

The St. Mary River Canyon Run is ready for some sun and fishing fun!

Today our destination was the Canyon Run on the St. Mary River. The weather was once again beautiful, with temperatures hovering around 30 degrees Celsius (86°F). There was a slight breeze along the River, just enough to refresh, but not enough to push the fly lines.

The St. Mary River was a couple of feet higher in the last couple of days, as well as a little darker due to a recent heavy thunderstorm. Today the River has dropped back down and the greenish color was almost gone with the clear water returning.

We floated, climbing out of the boat at each hole that looked inviting. Because the fish had not eaten much for a couple days, they were sure hungry today! All day long the fish were coming to our dry flies. The average fish released was 13 to 14 inches, but we also caught and released a nice 18 inch cutthroat, as well as many 16 inchers. We easily lost as many as we hooked up. We had two boats in the Canyon today and each angler caught and released from 18 and 25 cutthroats.

During the float we did not see any significant hatches of note, although we did see a few stone flies. That said, we did notice the yellow and brown hoppers are now active in the adjacent grass fields which signals we are now moving into the summer terrestrial season. We again used stimulators, Royal Trudes, H&L Variants, Royal Wulff's, Grey Wulff's, Chernobyl Ants and Brown Hoppers in the size 12 to 14 slot. Each fly we used gave us some success and the use of all of them resulted in a great day of fishing.

We had a lots of fun on the St. Mary River today.

Bull River Update:

We fished the Bull River on Sunday and she is still about 3 feet high and off color - a little greenish. We caught and released fish around the mouths of the tributary creeks entering the Bull. The flow and colour is reducing visibility so the cuts did not seem to see the fly very well today. On the scenery side, the float was absolutely beautiful and we enjoyed just getting out for the afternoon. We will give the Bull River a couple more weeks to settle down, by then it should be fishing very well. We will let you know when it rounds into form.

Call 1-800-667-2311 to talk to Karen about the days still available for a float. Our schedule is filling up fast, so call us soon if you want a specific day.

Take care, and we hope to see you on the water soon.

(Report #10, 2007/07/28)

The Elk River is Firing on all cylinders, as July rolls to a close!

Today we decided to head over to the Elk River. We had a couple seasoned anglers on board with us today so the expectations were high, even if they don't get out as much as they like! We floated the lower section of the River as it usually bodes well for landing some nice cutthroats and the scenery is stunning.

The weather was very warm today with temperatures reaching a smoldering 34 degrees Celsius (93°F). As usual the wind picked up near the end of the float, no surprises there!

The water conditions were just right for the float as the levels have dropped into the near perfect range. The fish seem to have settled into the summer perches, just where we hope to see them. The Elk is clear and all-round wonderful.

We fly fish from the boat a bit more than usual on this section, as it seems to be the best way to get to the fish without spooking them. Our game plan is to float close to logs, big rocks and other obstructions and cast around, behind or beside them into the pools. This can be very difficult from shore, thus our extended time in the boat. After the cast the plan is to get a good drift and maybe, just maybe, we will pick up a nice 17 or 18 inch cutthroat!

The Elk was definitely on today with cutthroats coming to the surface to take our flies with great regularity. The average size released was 15 inches and the four anglers caught around 20-25 cutthroats each. The nicest cutthroat of the day was caught by a 14 year old lad who landed a 18 incher - what a treat!

Grass hoppers in tan and yellow are now here in full force as August is upon us - size 10 and 12. Besides the hoppers, other successful patterns included black and cinnamon ants - size 14 and 16.

Chernobyl ants, H and L's, Royal Wulffs and stimulators also worked out well - size 12 and 14.

The weather in our region of southeastern British Columbia is now great and the fishing is spectacular! Come and check us out on-line or call 1-800-667-2311 to chat about available days, as well as the fishing.

We hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #11, 2007/08/04)

The Bull River is Beautiful!

Today we went up to the Bull River and floated the wonderful section that traverses the backside of the Rocky Mountains. The view was spectacular and the weather was perfect. Things have cooled down to a comfortable temperature of 30 degrees Celsius (86°F.). We seemed to be get a little of that transboundary smoke from the forest fires from Montana. Depending on the day and the wind direction, smoke can blow in or out of this valley, and today to our benefit, it was moving out. We do have a few fires burning in our area. However, they are way in the back country and being monitored closely as they are allowed to burn themselves out according to nature's rules of forest renewal.

The water on the Bull has definitely come down since our last test trip up into the area. But it still has not reached its normal summer depth. That said, the pools are well formed and the runs are in great shape to hold cutthroats. The water clarity is very good as well.

We floated most of the day as it allows us to cast the fly into waters that are hard to reach from shore. The cutthroats like to hang in the pools behind the rocks and of course it allows us to cast to the sections we can easily access from the boat. On a couple of occasions we did take the opportunity to get out and stretch our legs and soak up the scenery - clicking a couple of photos for 'winter pondering'!

As presumed, the trout seemed to be very hungry today as there has been very little fishing pressure over here. As soon as we unloaded a few good casts where the fly was allowed to drift down through the feed lane the trout were on it right of way. This produced a lot of fun and excitement on the day. Each angler caught and released around 20 fish in the 12-14 inch class. We also pulled in a few lovely 16 inch cutthroats. At the end of the day the anglers commented on how their arms felt spent and what a good feeling that is!

In terms of hatches, everything now is making way for grasshoppers as they are omnipresent!

We used many different fly pattern types and sizes (10-16) which brought the cuts to the surface. These included Royal and Grey Wulffs, Lime Trudes, Turks Tarantula, stimulators - orange or yellow, black and cinnamon ants, Adams, Parachute Adams and of course tan and yellow grasshoppers!

River Roundup: The fishing has been consistently good and the weather has been absolutely wonderful with a few wind exceptions. Come and visit the spectacular Rocky Mountain - East Kootenay area of British Columbia! Call 1-800-667-2311 to talk to us about conditions and details.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #12, 2007/08/08)

Skookumchuck River Report: what is old is new again!

Today we rose early and headed north from Kimberley up by Canal Flats to the majestic Skookumchuck River. The weather was spectacular and the thought of fishing this pristine little gem of

a stream spurred us to be the first people to cast our lines in its emerald pools on this day. The temperature was a nice 30 degrees Celsius (86°F.) and the sky was clear and calm!

The water conditions are normal for this time of year and the pools are well formed. As this trip requires us to hike in to begin our day, we saw some wildlife which always adds to the experience - deer grazing in meadows and an eagle soaring high above. On this day our biggest challenge was finding the perfect place to start fishing - far enough back into the canyon to avoid any body else who may be venturing out there. Our choice is to be alone on this beautiful stream!

We dry fly fished for the day as we walked and waded along the River. We just loved shooting the line just to let it drop softly behind a rock or a pool where you know there has to be a nice sized cutthroat lurking. We would cast the fly and put a nice mend on the line to make the fly drift naturally along the seam and wait, studying the water, to see if a cut takes it. We would do this a few times and then move onto the next good looking pool or run where we suspected the next fish would be waiting.

On the day we picked up fish in every hole and we caught and released a few nice 16 inchers! What fun it was! We could see fish feeding on a midge hatch so we tied on some small flies - Royal Wulffs and Parachute Adams (hi vise ones sizes 14 and 16) and watched the fish come and take them! The yellow and orange stimulators (sizes 12 and 14) also produced well.

The Skookumchuck River was her usual beautiful self producing all kinds of fish with a scenic backdrop that is just breathtaking. You can walk a long way back into the canyon, or just fish were you feel comfortable closer down. The key is to get a good drift on your fly and you will eventually get a fish to come up and look and even get fooled enough to take it! It is a special place amongst nature to be and fish.

River Roundup: The weather has cooled down a bit, but the fishing is still hot! Call 1-800-667-2311 to talk to Karen or Kelly about conditions and available dates.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #13, 2007/08/11)

St. Mary River Report: E for Extreme!

Today we floated the St. Mary River from the Power Line - down through the S Bends - to the takeout at the Pump House. The water has dropped quite a bit in this section of the Mary and with the emergence of the boulders in the S Bends, this piece of Class 3 category white water provided a bit of an extreme thrill today!

The weather has cooled down quite a bit from what we have been experiencing over the last month. The temperature on the day hovered around 20 degrees Celsius (70°F), along with sunny and clear skies, most comfortable. We had a big storm a couple days ago which has cooled everything down for the time being.

The water conditions on the St. Mary River are normal for this time of year. Water flow is still good and the runs are in good shape. With the added rain we had from the storm the River is looking extremely good now.

On the Pump House section we tend to float a little more than on the others, but we still get out of the boat and lay a line across the odd run hoping a fish will feed on the fly. Boats are really a bonus for fishing this River because it gives you the option of either shore... and for some reason the fishing always looks better on the other side!

The St. Mary fished extremely well today as we took advantage of the fish coming back to feed after the storm had slowed their activity for a day or so. You know you will have a good day when the fishing is great right from the start! Today our angler caught 35 cutthroat with 3 or 4 in the 17 inch category! These were some really nice sized fish. The rest were in the 14 inch slot. We also were surprised to catch a robust 21 inch cutthroat which really threw us for a loop when it came leaping out

of the River. What a treat to land and release this fish!

The dominant hatch continues to be the grasshoppers as they are still all over the fields and accidentally falling into the River for the fish to dine on from time to time. There was also a little bit of a caddis fly hatch in the evening, but nothing really to write home about.

In terms of flies, we used a Yellow Humpty which worked great (size 14). In addition we used yellow stimulators, Royal Trudes, Royal Wulffs, Lime Trudes, tan or yellow hoppers, and of course the Chernobyl Ants, which all contributed to an excellent day of fishing (size 10-14).

Planning Ahead: If you can get away, come and visit us in September as it is a wonderful month to fish here. Most people are off the roads and the rivers and the fishing is fabulous! Check out the fishing reports from previous years and call 1-800-667-2311 to talk to us about what you can expect and available days.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #14, 2007/08/21)

The Bull River Report: Good presentation is rewarded with good results!

Today our fishing destination was the Bull River. As we left the fly shop early in the morning the wind seemed to be picking up somewhat. However, as we drove out to Fort Steele and headed down the Bull River road we left the wind in the other valley. We traveled in behind the Rockies to the section of the Mountains called the Steeples where the weather was beautiful. The peak temperature today was around 22 degrees Celsius (72°F). The mornings have been pretty cool lately, almost cool enough to make one ponder the coming of Fall. But that will change this weekend as we expect things to heat up again.

The levels in our rivers are dropping these days and there is some sections on the Bull, as well as the St. Mary and the Elk that we have to get out and pull the raft around. This is quite normal for this time of year. We haven't seen much rain this summer, but the rivers are holding their own and levels are in in the normal summer range.

As per usual, we dry fly fished for the cutthroats and they were up and feeding. Our approach was to park the boat and fish either behind rocks or along the scattered obstacles of the shore line. Our casters today had a lot of skill so there casting was accurate and they were able to constantly mend their lines to get a good drift on the fly. This combination of feeding fish and quality anglers resulted in many fish being enticed to the fly, caught and released!

Both of the anglers caught and released about 30 fish today. The average size was 14 inches and we saw a few nice and bulky 16 inchers. It was definitely a lot of fun out on the Bull River today. Using a boat really allows an angler to cover lots of water and get into those hard to reach places one just can't do on a wade.

There were no notable hatches on the water today - just the regular multitude of hoppers and a few small midges. We took the lead from the midges and used the Blue Winged Olive pattern to match the hatch. Once fall shows its colors we will see the real Blue Winged Olive hatch, as well as the October Caddis. There is always something to look forward to on the rivers of southeastern British Columbia.

In addition to the B.W.O, the other effective flies used today included Royal Coachman, H&L Variants, Royal Wulffs, Grey Wulffs, Yellow Stimulators and Tan Grasshoppers (sizes 10 to 14).

Around the Bend: September is coming and it can be an excellent month to fish on our rivers. The angling pressure slows down and the weather tends to be sunny and warm, beautiful for angling. Come and experience the Fall in the Canadian Rockies! Call 1-800-667-2311 for details.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #15, 2007/08/29)

Elk River Report: the water levels are normal and the fishing is fine!

Today our destination was the lower section of the Elk River. The weather was very pleasant with only a few clouds to mark an otherwise clear sky with a maximum temperature of around 25 degree Celsius (77F). The weather is starting to take on the feel of early fall as the mornings have become a little cooler. That said, one has to dress in layers because things always heat up as the day progresses.

The Elk River is flowing along at its normal rate for late summer and is particularly beautiful at this time of year with the fall colors just starting to show around the edges. The pools and ripples of this freestone river are now at their best for walk and wade anglers, as well as those fortunate enough to be floating it. The pools are clear and crisp, but the cutthroats remain very hard to see because of their amazing natural camouflage. We know from experience that these pools are full of fish as the water at this level concentrates them for us. This leaves an angler with an excellent chance of getting good hookups, assuming the cast is good!

At this time of year one only has to put a good cast over the bubble line, then it is up to the fish to decide if it wants the food you are offering or whether it is waiting for something else. On today's trip we floated quite a bit, stopping and holding the boat in areas where it really benefits the angler. Casting from the boat is great as one does not have to worry about the trees behind, or slipping on the rocks underfoot! The cutthroats were feeding very well today. We think the cooler mornings push the fish to feed as water temperatures start the day at around 56 degrees F. and move to an afternoon high of about 66. A perfect range for fish to feed and be active.

So with the right temperatures and all this activity, how did it fish? It fished very well for the angler as he caught and released around 30 fish. This included some nice 16 to 17 inch cuts.

The funny thing about these fish is that they seem to prefer to come up and take the fly as slowly as possible! This type of soft 'hit' really tests one patience because if you pull that fly immediately as you feel them, you will pull it right out of their mouth. On the other hand, if you let them take the fly and walk away with it you will definitely be hooked up! You just have to have good self-control and not get too excited out there!

The hatches we have been observing on the Elk lately include Blue Winged Olives, Green Drakes and even the odd stone fly. We anticipate the emergence of the October Caddis in the very near future. In addition to imitating the hatches identified above, we also had good success with either black or cinnamon colored ants. Various hopper patterns - the bullet head hopper, the tan hopper and the parachute hopper - also worked well. Parachute Adams, Royal Wulffs, Grey Wulffs and Lime Trudes, sizes 14 and 16 are working too. In reality, many flies will work if you get a good drift on your bug, but the ones mentioned above are tried and true!

September Calling: September is a great time to fish our rivers if you like to 'match the hatch'. Blue Winged Olives, Green Drakes and October Caddis all come off and it is great fun to fish for the cutthroats, trying to fool them with your fly! In addition, the rivers are pretty quite compared to the summer months and the changing leaves provide an awesome backdrop. The weather tends to be pretty nice as well.

Feel free to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss a float or talk about the fishing.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #16, 2007/09/07)

The Elk River September Report.

Today's trip to the Elk was overcast and cool enough to wear waders. We experienced a downstream wind which is not normal for the Elk, but a pleasant surprise to the guide rowing the boat on the day! The temperature peaked at around 20 degrees Celsius in the afternoon (70F.). It made for a beautiful Fall day in the Canadian Rockies.

The water conditions on the Elk are normal for this time of year. The River is holding fish in many of its pools, as well as close to the shore. The fish being in close to shore makes wade fishing very good, but fishing from the boat increases the chance of catching fish even more. It is simple, you just see more fish habitat and more water means more cutthroats looking for food.

We floated primarily, getting out to test the nicest pools by casting our lines into the runs. The fish on the Elk River have seen a fair number of anglers this year so we have to use a 5 to 6X tippet and smaller flies to interest these experienced fellows!

Today the Elk fished very well. While we caught only a few in the morning, it picked up substantially in the afternoon. The average size fish caught today was 15 to 16 inches. Each angler released 20 to 25 fish with a few in the 17 to 18 inch range hooked, fought and landed. We are catching a lot of nice, big, healthy looking fish at this time of year.

The Fall has arrived on the Elk. This time of year brings with it many specific bugs including; Blue Winged Olives, Lime Trudes, Caddis and Green Drakes. This leaves the fish with a wide variety of food choices throughout the day. If you fish a run and have some success, try changing the fly around and casting again. These fish are used to a lot of variety of food in the water and they will probably come for it a second time round. That assumes you get a good drift on the fly, as any drag reduces your chances of enticing a fish significantly!

Small flies are very effective these days. Blue Winged Olives sizes 14-18, Royal Wulff's sizes 14-18, Cinnamon Ants sizes 16-18, Stimulators - orange and yellow - sizes 12-16 are all producing well.

Fall is Here:

Feel free to give us a call about booking a Fall trip with us. Come and see the St. Mary, Elk, Bull or Skookcumchuck rivers decked out in all their fall colors. This time of year is a great time to be in the Rockies. The spectacular palate of yellows and oranges set off against the blue sky is spectacular!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #17, 2007/09/08)

St. Mary Report: Fall is emerging along with the caddis!

Today we floated the Canyon section of the St. Mary River which runs from Wycliffe down to the St. Eugene Mission. It was cool this morning, starting out at a brisk 10 degrees Celsius (50 F.), but warming up throughout the day to a high of 25 C (77 F.). We had sun and cloud today, but no wind which was excellent.

The Fall colors are starting to show as the leaves on the trees are turning bright orange and yellow creating a spectacular setting against the backdrop of the Rockies. It must be nearing hunting season as all the deer and bucks are moving into the town of Kimberley for shelter, yes Fall is here! This is good for us keen fly fishers because we are seeing very few anglers during our floats.

The St. Mary River flows are normal for this time of year. For walking and wading - the river is great as you can now cross in lots of areas. However, you still have to walk a ways to get to the River - but if you do not mind the walk the River is great. The best way to see the St. Mary River remains via a float. It really does not come close to many roads and it feels and looks pristine and beautiful as you float from pool to more pools.

We floated today, getting out on the sandbars to cast for hungry cutthroats. As Fall is here, the fish are feeding hard as they can sense winter coming. The sunny days bring the cuts to the surface very readily. So we are casting into the nicely formed pools and in runs where the water looks to be low, but we know from experience is holding fish.

Today the St. Mary fished medium to good. It was slow in the morning, but picked up in the afternoon. With the warming temperatures after lunch the cutthroats were up and feeding! We caught and released about 15 each. We also had a nice cutbow on the line that reached about 17 inches and it was full of jump! We have noticed the Kokanee (land locked sockeye) are coming up into the lower parts of the St. Mary to spawn. This means that we have to pass over some of the pools where the cuts are just sitting in the bottom downstream of the spawning fish, slurping up their eggs!

The October Caddis are just coming out of their cocoons and hatching. We are seeing Blue Winged Olives hatches on the overcast days. The grasshoppers are still ubiquitous in the fields and along the banks of the River as well. What we found most effective today was the Yellow Grasshopper size 12, the orange and yellow Stimulator sizes 10, 12 and 14's, the Cinnamon Ant sizes 16 and 18, and of course the Chernobyl Ant sizes 8, 10, and 12's - orange and yellow!

Looking into Fall:

Be sure to check the fishing regulations as the beginning of September means some parts of the Wigwam and the Skookcumchuck rivers are closed due to Bull Trout spawning.

There is still time for a trip so give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 to chat.

Take care and good fishing!

(Report #18, 2007/09/11)

The October Caddis are making the cutthroats in the upper St. Mary fat!

Today we parked our vehicles up at St. Mary Lake and launched our boat for a ride down to the Pumphouse take-out near the Kimberley Golf Course. The weather provided us with one of those spectacular fall days - cool in the morning warming up to 20 Celsius (70 F.) by mid afternoon against the backdrop of a clear blue sky with no breeze! The trees are definitely turning color and we are seeing a few more animals coming down to the river to drink in the mornings and check out the Kokanee spawning in the River. We saw one bear and lots and lots of white tail mules and bucks this morning.

The St. Mary is now a little low for the boat, but normal for this time of year. On this upper section of the River, which is smaller than the rest to start with, the clients had to hop out 2 or 3 times so the guide could walk it over the shoals. The upside of the low water is that the cutthroat are concentrated in the nice big pools, or in the long the runs strewn with boulders, trees and logs. Just where you would hope to find the fish!

During the float we hopped out and walked onto the emergent islands to fish the runs. We walked up the River and fished many nice pools, got back into the boat, floated down to another prime location and fished some more. We took this approach throughout the day.

In anticipation of winter, the fish were actively feeding on the St. Mary today. We were able to bring in about 50 cutthroats with some nice ones in the 17 inch range. And these fish are fat! Their stomachs are big and round right now as they have been gorging themselves on the huge number of October Caddis. While the fish are very active now, one still must present the fly correctly and get a good drift so the fly looks/floats naturally! Remember, you have to fool these fish even when the feed is plentiful!

We have seen many October Caddis shells lying on the rocks along the bank edges. Grasshoppers are still out in the fields as well, but their numbers are falling. We responded with Stimulators to resemble

the October Caddis, plus caddis patterns with green and tan bodies, sizes 10 to 14. We also used the big October Caddis pattern in a size 8. In addition, we tossed Royal Trudes, tan Grasshoppers and the guide's special - the Chernobyl Ant!

There is still time to book a float. Call Kelly at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the conditions and availability.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #19, 2007/09/12)

The Elk River produces well for experts!

Our destination today was the lower Elk River floating from Morrissey down to Elko. We like this section not only because we know it so well, but it is also a little closer to Kimberley reducing our travel time.

Today the beautiful weather has left us as we maxed out at about 14 Celsius (60 F.) with overcast skies and rain. We actually had a good down pour here in Kimberley as well as over on Elk this morning. The upside was that with the rain, there was no wind which is a good thing!

The water level on the Elk is pretty good for this time of year. We do not have to get out of the boat as the River still has good flow to it. The fishing conditions are in their prime as the fish are stacked in the runs and pools of the River. Today we floated the Elk for some distance casting from the boat up along bank edges, beside logs and fallen trees. We would look for the bubble line and cast into it, make a good mend and hope a fish would be fooled and take the fly instead of the real ones. With the rain comes many hatches on the River. The Elk has a limestone bottom which contributes to the many hatches we see on this system.

On this trip each angler caught and released around 25 fish as these guys are expert fly fishers. They started to pick up fish after the heavy rain of the morning subsided. Most of the fish caught and released were holding in 5 to 6 feet of water. The guys caught four in the 17 to 18 inch range. They were fat cuts, very healthy looking and bright in color.

In terms of dominant hatches, small midges were coming off, as well as Blue Winged Olives and Green Drakes. We used Blue Duns, Blue Winged Olives, Stimulators, H & L Variants, Green Drakes and Black Ant patterns - sizes 12 to 16.

September is a wonderful month to fish the Elk with beautiful fall colors, very few anglers and the fish feeding like crazy before winter rolls in!

Hope to see you this fall!

(Report #20, 2007/09/20)

The St. Mary River Report: it is cool, but the Blue Winged Olives help heat things up!

Today the harbinger of winter was event as we saw snow on the mountain tops. Things started off at around 2 degrees Celsius (36 F) with cloudy skies. During the day it warmed up to a tepid 12 degrees (55F). Good thing we had our fleece and a compliment of warm waders as we are in the grip of fall now!

We packed up the truck and headed down to float the Pump House section of the St. Mary - the Golf Course to Wycliffe. The flow of the St. Mary is getting low now, but we still have not reached the lowest levels we saw back in 98'. The water remains crystal clear and the runs are well formed and numerous.

We floated the section getting out of the boat where the ends of the pool were too shallow to float us. We fished the runs and the pools and the middle sections too far to reach from shore. With the lower flows we had little difficulty anchoring up where we wanted. This allowed us to cast unobstructed over long distances from the boat.

Today we saw what the St. Mary really has to offer in the fall. The cool weather brought on the most robust Blue Winged Olive hatch we have seen so far this year. This motivated the fish to get up and feed aggressively. The hatch occurred just after lunch and we were ready for it. The anglers forgot about the cool temperatures when the guide found the run with the feeding fish! Funny how it goes like that.

Each angler hooked and released around 20 cutthroats. Some were in the 17 to 18 inch range and most were on the big side, 15 and 16 inches - fat and chunky. You can tell these fish are feeding voraciously as they prepare themselves for the long winter of inactivity ahead.

As mentioned above, we experienced a large Blue Winged Olive hatch. We mainly fished with Blue Winged Olives, but did try the Green Drakes and green or orange Caddis's sizes 14 to 18 to change things up a bit.

As the season starts to wind down and the weather cools off, the fishing remains pretty hot.

Take care.

Kelly

(Report #21, 2007/09/26)

The St. Mary River Canyon Run: late September 'skinny' still provides some fun!

On this trip down the St. Mary our choice was a run of the Canyon section, from Wycliffe to the Mission. Today we experienced both sun and cloud, but on the whole it was a wonderful fall day. The pattern of very cool mornings persists, but the temperature did make it up to around 16 degrees Celsius (60's F) by midday. The sun was actually warm enough to force us to peel a layer of clothing off! The beautiful fall colors are omnipresent as the trees are in their fall luminance and the tops of the Rockies are carpeted in snow ... spectacular.

The St. Mary is very skinny now as we have had very little rain this summer. However, recently it has come up just slightly due to the cool weather. No doubt the rain and snow in the high country has contributed to the stabilization and slight rise in the flow as well.

During our float we noticed that a lot of runs we usually stop and fish are no longer very fishable. We also could see the fish holding in the faster water in the deeper part of the stream. So during the trip we fished from the boat, as well as hopping out and walking the gravel bars and edges casting the fly as we went.

The fish were up and feeding today. The only challenge was that one had to be able to cast the fly to a specific area and get a good long drift in order to touch today's fish. The big guys needed to see the fly drifting for awhile before they would hit it. During the float we caught and released around 20 fish per angler including a few cutbows along with all the cutthroat. The average size cutthroat was 15 to 16 inches and we were fortunate enough to see a couple in the 17 to 18 inch category. These guys would come the distance for the fly if one was able to maintain the drift and not allow any drag to occur!

There was not a lot of hatch activity today. We saw some Blue Winged Olives and Caddis action, but nothing to write home about. So we used attractor patterns, such as stimulators in orange and brown, Royal Wulffs and H & L Variants, as well as Blue Winged Olives and Chernobyl Ants. All in all we had a fine day of fishing set against a beautiful Rocky Mountain fall.

Until Next Year:

The Elk and the St. Mary rivers have fished wonderfully this season and we have greatly enjoyed showing everyone the waters are lucky enough to float and wade. Thank you for coming up and seeing what we have to offer and supporting the St. Mary Angler. Here's to another successful year, thanks to Everyone!

Have a safe and enjoyable off-season. See you next summer!

Yours truly,

Kelly and Karen Laatsch