

ST. MARY ANGLER FLY SHOP

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Fishing
Report

June

July

August

Sept.

October

2006 Season in Review

Going fishing is a lot like running a vineyard. At the end of the day the quality of the fishing is mostly dependent on the weather, just as it is for growing grapes for wine making. And this year we had a "vintage year" for fishing as the weather was pretty well perfect from start to finish! The season started early, the weather was warm and dry throughout, and the season went as long as there was interest.

Our season started in late April when some of the lakes were clear enough for us to launch our pontoon boats. On our first trip to Premier Lake we had an excellent start as each of us landed 8 to 10 rainbows and a couple nice 17 inch brook trout. All the rainbows were bright and healthy looking, as they fell into the 15 to 18 inch slot. Hitting the lakes early in the spring is always a healthy way to shake off the winter rust as we await the opening of the rivers come June 15th.

By late May, our favorite lakes remained productive as the freshet on the rivers was peaking. We fished Whiteswan, Premier and Mitten lakes a number of times. Lake fishing activities peaked with a massive Black Ant hatch that saw clouds of bugs and plenty of beautiful rainbows testing our lines and breaking the surface of our alpine lakes.

The early spring freshet was aided by some record hot weather in mid May. It sure was beneficial for fishers like us because it meant all of the low and mid level snow pack was gone by June 15th and conditions on the rivers for fishing was good by opening day. We are always happy to see the freshet come early; even it means a little flooding in the valleys!

By the last week of June the St. Mary River was ready to fish. On our first day on the water there was little wind and temperatures of 86 F and the water was clear. The freshet had definitely changed the Rivers' makeup. Some of the last years' log jams had washed away and a number of newly uprooted trees had grounded out at various river turns, bends and bars. The bottom stretch of the St. Mary experienced a lot of improvement as there were many new braids and back channels to fish. The River had completed its annual renewal of cutthroat habitat just as it has done since the ice age. The fishing was surprisingly good early on as the conditions were good right from the beginning.

In terms of the Elk River, it also started to fish well fairly early on. As usual, the Elk took a little longer to round into form, but things were good from the start as well. The first time out we were into the cutthroats pretty good and landed a beautiful 24 inch bull trout.

During July the rivers found their summer grooves, the weather was sunny, hot and clear, and the conditions for fishing were excellent. Our floats on the St. Mary were producing very good catch rates for cutthroats in the 15-16 inch class, as well as the odd cutthroat-rainbow cross. By mid July the Yellow Sallies were being replaced by grass hoppers as the dominant food source for the fish. Our floats on the Elk River were also producing good catch rates for cuts in the 16-17 inch slot. The hatches were marked by Yellow Sallies and Green Drakes and we were not deterred by the odd windy afternoon on

the River - par for the course on the Elk. In terms of the Bull River, we were having some great success. Although the fish are a little smaller (10-14 inch range) the catch rates were very high at 50 plus per angler. By late July the stoneflies had faded away and were replaced by grasshoppers and caddis flies.

By August the weather was still holding true for fishing with hot, sunny days and little cloud cover. We did experience just enough cool days to keep the landscape from getting too dry. Water levels were optimal on all the rivers. Over on the Elk we were catching some really chunky cuts at a very good pace. The hatch was dominated by hoppers, caddis flies and green drakes. On the St. Mary, it was fishing extremely well as we were catching lots of cuts from 14-18 inches. The hatches consisted of Pale Morning Duns and Blue Winged Olives in addition to the omnipresent grasshoppers. The Bull River continued to produce crazy amounts of fun fishing and we continued to enjoy the weather.

By early September the hatches had pretty well gone and we were into another phase of the season. Water levels we starting to get low - concentrating the fish - and we continued to be blessed by warm and clear days. On the Bull River the guides were having to work a little harder to maneuver the boats amongst all of the structure that was being exposed with lower water levels. That said, the anglers were still doing well. Hatches were limited to the big October Caddis coming off at the end of the day. On the Elk River the fishing remained good and some nice big fish in the 18 inch range were being landed. The St.Mary continued to produce fish between 14 to 15 inches with some bigger, chunky, cutthroats measured at 17 and 18 inches being landed.

By the third week of September we were seeing some fall weather and the Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis were dominant. That said, the cooler weather did not impact the fishing as we were experiencing some fantastic days on the St.Mary and Elk rivers catching lots and lots of fish with a number of big fish over 18 inches turning up. WOW.

Fall really is a great time to fish out here not only because of the great catch rates and fish size, but because no one is out on the rivers as well!

So there you have it. 2006 was a 'vintage' year on the St.Mary, Elk and Bull Rivers. The season started early, produced well throughout, and finished very strong. We had a great year of fishing and greatly appreciated your patronage. We hope to see you next year and are booking 2007 trips now. We will be attending tradeshows this winter and hope to see you there! Check www.stmaryangler.com for dates and locations.

Take care,



Kelly Laatsch, St. Mary Angler Fly Shop.

2006 FISHING REPORTS

(Report #25, 2006/10/10)

We are done for the year, see you next season!

After another great season of fishing, we are now closed for the year. We will be attending tradeshow this winter so please check the [Tradeshow Page](#) to see if we are coming to a venue near you.

As always, we greatly appreciate your patronage and look forward to seeing you again in the future.

Take care and have a fun and safe winter!

All the best,

Kelly and Karen Laatsch

(Report #24, 2006/09/30)

While the fishing pressure has disappeared, the Elk is still cranking out great fishing trips!

The fishing season is definitely starting to wind down as interest amongst fishers is waning as everyone starts to focus on what fall has to offer. That said, it is not because the fishing has fallen off as the rivers remain in excellent shape with virtually no angling pressure. The streams are now wide open for anyone who wishes to access them. With this in mind we ventured over to the Elk to run the bottom end today.

Once again the weather was very nice. It was a beautiful fall day with all the leaves on the trees in the midst of turning yellow and orange! The temperature reached a balmy 21 degrees on the day (70F). The morning started off cool, but it definitely warmed up by mid afternoon. By mid-afternoon we almost wished we had worn our shorts instead of the waders! There was some wind on the bottom end, but that is normal as the Elk River always seems to have some of it! The River elevations remain about normal for this time of year.

We floated the section for quite a while then stopped along one of the more promising spots to fish a few runs from shore. The fish were all very close to the edges so the anglers really did not have to cast too far to hook a nice cutthroat. Between the two anglers they caught about 95 cutthroats! So you can say the fishing was 'on' to say the least. The catch rates are always bolstered when you have a couple of very good fishermen in the raft and that was the case today. The average size was 15 inches and the biggest fish landed was around 18 inches - nice fish! It was definitely a fantastic day to be out on the Elk River.

There was no discernible hatch on this float, maybe a few Blue Winged Olives coming off, but nothing striking. We used various ant patterns, Blue Winged Olives (sized 16 -18), Gray Wulffs, in addition to the Parachute Adams on top of the regular Adams.

With the season drawing to a close, October is still a great month to book a half day float and the weather has been just great!

Come and see Kimberley in the fall as it really is a beautiful sight!

(Report #23, 2006/09/24)

Fall is spectacular on the St. Mary River... and the fishing is pretty good too!

Today was just beautiful with a cool, crisp, clear morning warming up to 19 degrees Celsius in the afternoon (66 F). In addition, there was not a cloud in the sky and the trees are turning colors -- hues of orange and yellow abound! In front of this fall backdrop we headed down the St. Mary River via the 'Mission to Fort Steele' run.

The water levels on the St. Mary have come up a little due to the rainy weather in the past week. So the flow is normal for this time year. Today we floated quite a bit as this bottom section is a longer run. However, we did get out and fish one of our favorite channels for cutthroats and cutbows... and this section produced like crazy!

In terms of the number of fish landed, each angler caught around 35 fish. In one section they caught and released 6 cutbows all around 17-18 inches. These fish sure like to jump and it definitely makes the sport very interesting! In terms of the cutthroats caught, they averaged 15 inches and were nice looking fish.

As per the time of year, the Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis were dominant. In response we used their tied replicas, as well as the Compara-dun (size 18), stimulators and Gray Wulff's (size 14 and 16)

The weatherman tells us that wonderful weather is expected through the end of September. We will be running float trips till the middle of October. We are offering a special price for an October float at \$395.00 Canadian for 1 or 2 anglers. Come and see why October is such a wonderful month to fish!

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to check conditions or book one of our late season floats.

(Report #22, 2006/09/21)

It is fall on the Elk River and the dry flies are working fabulously!

Today was definitely fall weather as we made our way to the Elk River for a float down to the Morrissey take out. While we have been experiencing a mixed bag of weather on the St. Mary as of late - rain, wind and sun - the weather on the Elk has been pretty good. Today it was a beautiful fall day with temperatures reaching 14-15 degrees C (60 F), and yes, the dries were working fabulously!

The water conditions are great as we have had some rain to keep the Elk in the normal range. Some of the small tribbs of the Elk are quite low, but the rain in the last few days has been a bit of a blessing!

We floated allot on the Elk today, fishing from the raft. That said, we did spend some time at a couple of our favorite holes. It is nice to get out and stretch the legs while we walk the big pools and the banks.

This Elk float produced many fish in the morning and the afternoon was very good as well. On the day the two anglers caught and released over 20 fish each. The average size was 14 to 15 inches, but they were very chunky. When the clouds rolled over later in the afternoon, the bigger fish started sipping the Blue Winged Olives. We were very pleased to catch a half dozen nice 17 to 18 inch cutthroats, it was awesome!

The hatch included Blue Winged Olives and Caddis flies - sized 14 to 18. We used ant patterns, Blue Winged Olives, Stimulators - orange and yellow , October Caddis and Green Drakes.

Cool weather has been here for a week or so, but it looks good for the last week of September as we expect more great fall fishing

Give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 to check conditions or book one of our late season floats.

(Report #21, 2006/09/12)

St. Mary River Report: The Canyon Run is producing well.

The Canyon Run on the St. Mary River was our float of choice for this early fall day. The weather was quite pleasant with temperatures reaching 23 degrees Celsius (73 F) . While the wind picked up near the end of the day, it was more intermittent gusts than a constant blowing, so it really did not effect the fishing much.

The water is low, but normal for this time of year. Kelly was only forced out of the boat a couple times to guide the raft over some shallows. Having the Moravia inflatable makes a float at low water pretty comfortable as you do not get jarred by the odd rock as you would in a hard shell. One of the nice aspects of the lower water level is that it makes getting in and out of the boat rather easy so one has little difficulty vacating the raft to walk and wade along the shore.

Today we floated from hole to hole, getting out to walk the shore line and fish the ripples and foam lines. We also spent time casting along the log jams and rock structures. During our pursuit of the cutthroats we saw allot of nature today. There was a mother deer and her two fawns coming down to the waters edge and eagles and ravens circling over head from time to time. This was all against the backdrop of the changing colour pallet that fall is bringing to southeastern British Columbia.

In terms of the fishing, around 55 cutthroats were caught and released between the two anglers. The fish averaged between 14 to 15 inches in length. Some bigger fish were also landed including some nice chunky cutthroats that measured 17 and 18 inches - nice, thick, healthy, fish.

We are still seeing grass hoppers in the fields and noticed some October Caddis were hatching during the float. We only used a few different flies today as the fish were definitely on. Our choice included Royal Trudes, Royal Coachman, hoppers and Chernobyl Ants.

While cool weather is moving into the area, the Blue Winged Olive hatches have started which is a good sign because they can trigger some very good fishing. Just remember to dress warm because we are in the Rockies and the weather can change fast - just wait 5 minutes!

Hope to see you on the water soon. Call 1-800-667-2311 to discuss conditions or to book a float.

(Report #20, 2006/09/10)

Elk River Report: Fall is on the way, but plenty of good fishing remains to be had!

On today's trip we wheeled off to the lower Elk River for a float. The day turned out to be a bit overcast with temperatures hitting around 22 degrees Celsius (72 F). In the early mornings we are definitely feeling the effects of fall. Please make sure you bring up enough cloths so you can apply a few layers. While it certainly is cool in the mornings, it heats up by mid afternoon when you will want to strip a few of those layers off! In terms of water levels, the Elk River is holding its own. All the rivers of our region are low these days, but they remain very fishable.

So we headed down the Elk River, floating and fishing the holes. We tried to get close to structures like fallen trees and big rocks whenever we could. The fish are now concentrated in fewer locations as the water levels are down. Once hooked the fish still have areas to run, but generally after you hook them up they seem to find their way back to their original areas pretty quickly.

The fishing was hot in the morning with a fish caught almost every cast! We stopped at lunch and fished the run adjacent to our picnic spot and everyone did quite well during the 'break'!

In the afternoon one of the two boats did better than the other. The experienced anglers caught and released 20 to 25 fish each while the beginner caught around 8 to 10 - not a bad start to one's fishing career! All the fish caught were cutthroats averaging 14 to 15 inches with a couple of nice 18 inchers coming to the boat, but not being landed. As usual lots of fish were rolled - as many as were caught - but hey, that is cutthroat fishing on the Elk River!

In terms of the hatch, October Caddis was the predominant insect. We used Blue Winged Olives, H&L Variants, hoppers, Elk Haired Caddis and Adam.

Looking Down River:

September and October are truly wonderful months to fish the Elk and St. Mary rivers. The dry fly fishing is very good at this time of year, the fall colors are in full swing and you pretty well have the rivers to yourself. As an added bonus, if you book a trip in October our prices are lowered to \$425.00 Canadian a day. We are available to guide you until the middle of October so please give a float trip your full consideration!

(Report #19, 2006/09/04)

The Bull River provides way more 'fun' than 'labour' this September 4th!!

Today we ventured up above the Aberfeldie Dam for another adventure on the Bull River. It was a beautiful day with temperatures reaching 31 degrees Celsius (88 F) and there was no wind to accompany a perfectly blue sky. While it was 'crisp' in the morning, it warmed right up in the afternoon. It is now apparent that the earliest signs of fall are upon us, but plenty of good fishing remains!

The Bull is still holding its water levels, but there sure are a lot of rocks to maneuver around in this watercourse. We only had to 'portage' over a couple of low spots to overcome some 'skinny' water. That said, there remains many nice deep pockets with fish holding behind every rock.

We floated and fished quite a bit, but we also pulled over and fished some pools that looked too good to pass over. We fished for a while during our picnic lunch stop as well. The fishing was very good as the two anglers caught and released over 50 fish. The fish themselves fell into the 10 to 14 inch slot.

We did not see any discernible hatch during the trip. However, as we were leaving the water, the big October Caddis were starting to come off. During the day we used an assortment of dry flies including: Royal Wulff's, H and L variants, Lime Trudes and Blue Winged Olives - all sized 14 and 16.

The Bull River always provides great scenery in addition to the great fishing and today was another example of that!

Take care and we hope to see you on the river this fall. Feel free to call Karen at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss a float or the conditions.

Word on the River: Bears are starting to head down into the river valleys looking for food at this time of year. So just remember if you come across one they are likely more scared of you than you are of them!

(Report #18, 2006/08/28)

August winds down as the St. Mary continues to provide great fishing!

The Wycliffe to the Mission run on St. Mary River was our fishing destination today. The weather was just perfect as temperatures hovered around 28 to 29 degrees Celsius (82-84 F), with a few high clouds and very little wind.

The St. Mary is running at its normal level and flow for this time of year. There are a couple spots further upriver where you have to get out of the boat to get across some low spots - but that is normal for this time of year!

Today we floated from one piece of nice water to the next, getting out a number of times to fish the runs. This section lends itself well to fishing out of the boat. We saw a little wildlife on this particular trip as we caught a deer coming down to drink from the River.

The St. Mary River fished very well today with the average fish falling into the 14 to 15 inch class. Around 30 cutthroats were landed per angler along with another two 'cutbows' that were about 19 inches! The big cutbows put on quite a show as they jumped out of the water and provided a good fight!

There was no hatch of note today, so we decided to fish Chernobyl Ants and they worked extremely well! The nice thing about the Ants is that they are easy to see and you just have to pop them along the edges of logs and rock structures or close to the shore! And "bang", they are lots of fun!

The conditions and the fishing remain very good, so we hope to see you on the river soon!

Call 1-800-667-2311 to talk to Karen or Kelly about conditions and days available to book a float.

Looking Down River: September is just around the corner and the fishing is very good at this time of year. We are excited to get out on the rivers as the cool mornings bring on the Blue Winged Olive hatches and the cutthroats feed on them voraciously. It should be an excellent fall as summer has been great!

(Report #17, 2006/08/15)

There is plenty of action on the Bull River!

The Bull River beckoned us to fish today. The weather was a mixed bag. It was cool in the morning, warming up to 25 Celsius (77 F) by 11:00 a.m., with only a few high clouds dotting the sky. So it turned out to be a very nice day after the cool start. Over on the Canyon section of St. Mary they had a 25 minute rain shower. That is why you must pack rain jackets and dress in layers as you never know what you are in for in the Canadian stretch of the Rockies!

The Bull was up a foot from the last time we floated, making things a little easier for the guide to navigate the Moravia. The fish were active and the guide maneuvered through the rocks with ease!

On the Bull River we mostly float and fish the areas of the deep blue pools, or along and behind rocks, logs and trees. On this River you are casting nonstop and you sure can feel it in your arm at the end of the day!

The average size fish caught on this trip was from 12-14 inches. Between the two anglers they caught and released over 50 cutthroats! There is so much nice water for fish on the Bull. The biggest cutthroats

caught included a couple of nice fat 15 inchers!

There was no discernible hatch on the Bull today. Again we used orange and red stimulators, foam ants, red and yellow humpies, and a few different types of hoppers - namely Dave's and Joe's.

The Bull is a beautiful little river and we had lots of action and plenty of fun.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #16, 2006/08/14)

The Elk River remains in good summer form!

This trip we were off to the Elk River where we fished the very bottom run - down to Elko. The weather has recently cooled and it was around 26 Celsius today (78 F). It provided a very nice summer day with only a few clouds in the sky. The wind picked up for a couple hours in the morning and stopped by lunch, the afternoon was just beautiful!

The Elk River is at its normal level and flow for this time of year. We had some rain recently which has supported the levels and made the fish happy, or so we suppose!

We floated the bottom section and mainly stayed in the boat. The bottom section of the Elk has allot of structure with trees in the water, rocks, etc., great areas for fish to thrive in. The scenery is just beautiful as well. The views of the Rockies are unreal! But who has time to look around at the Mountains with all these fish under your feet!

The fish were 'on' today, or maybe it was the right fly? In the morning more fish were missed than caught, but they still managed to catch and release around 20 fish per angler. (One has to remember to relax and let the fish take the fly as they tend to take it very slowwwly.) The fish were a nice size ranging from 12 inches up to a couple big old 18 inchers. Some pulled hard and put up a nice fight, but as the guides say they are not as feisty as the St. Mary fish, but they sure are chunky!

There was no real hatch today. The most effective flies were hoppers, Lime Trudes, H&L Trudes and small black ants - sized 14 and 16. Most flies we used were in the 14-16 size range.

This summer has been a very good summer for the rivers. The flows have been good as we have had some cool weather to offset the hot. The fish have been on most of the time. That said, everyday we start fresh and some days are better than others.

Hope to see you on the river soon!

Call to book your float at 1-800-667-2311

(Report #15, 2006/08/05)

The St. Mary River provides lots of fun with rainbows, cut-bows, bulls and cutthroat!

The St. Mary River was our destination today as we floated from the Pumphouse to Wycliffe which proved to be a very wise choice.

It was sunny with nice temperatures up to 27 degrees Celsius (80 F). We did see a little bit of a haze

from a fire across the border in Washington State, but nothing to worry about. On the whole it was a comfortable day, with the occasional nice breeze.

The water level is normal for this time of year with the structure of the River as good as it gets. All the runs and pools are perfectly formed (as only nature can) as the River enjoys its summer flow.

During the float we parked the boat on some of the nice runs and casted towards the shore - where the fish like to lay. On one exciting occasion a cast was made and the next thing we saw was a fish coming out of the water to slam the fly. At first we thought it was a little cutthroat, but it turned out to be a true rainbow. It jumped and fought like crazy! It was 19 inches long... a very pretty fish!

As the day progressed we got out of the boat more often and walked the shore line looking for any signs of rising fish. When we saw some activity we would then cast out a hopper and watch the fish swim in and take the fly. They wouldn't wait for it to float over them as they were aggressively hammering it! We caught a nice bull trout on a dry, which seems crazy, but it did come to the surface for the fly. We also caught four cut-bows, all in the 16 inch range and another large 19 incher that was chunky and fat! In addition to catching the rainbow, cut-bows and the bull trout, the 2 anglers caught another 30 cutthroats. It was a very good day with many different types of trout coming to the fly.

There was no real hatch on the day. We fished with hoppers, Trudes, ants, Adams and stimulators. The flies ranged from size 12 to 16.

The St. Mary River has been fishing extremely well this season and the weather has been very nice to boot!

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 for details on fishing and available days for guided floats.

Hope to see you on the River soon!

(Report #14, 2006/08/03)

The Bull River is Calling!

Today's choice was the Bull River float. So with near 'perfect' temperatures, 25 Celsius (77F), we were off! There were only a few clouds to mark the sky on this pleasant summer day.

The water level on the Bull is in its normal range for this time of year. The fish are also at rest in their secret spots waiting to pounce on a tasty morsel - or a well placed dry fly.

The fishing was very, very good today with each of the two boats catching and releasing around 50 fish. Each boat included one adult and one keen angler under the age of 16. The fish were pretty active throughout the whole float. There is one particularly deep hole on the Bull that is of note because the fish caught there are a bluish hue, most strange. We better ask around to find out if there is a legend about these colorful fellows!

The average size caught and released was 12 to 14 inches, however we did catch a couple in the 16 inch range. The Bull is a very different float compared with the St. Mary and the Elk as it has a tremendous amount of structure which creates a different pulse to the water and accordingly, a different pace. It is definitely a wild back country stream where the fish are not huge, but they are plentiful and willing to go! Clients often comment on how peaceful the Bull is, in addition to remarking on the breathtaking scenery and the fact that there seems to be a fish behind every rock!!

There was no identifiable hatch on the Bull River today, but we are sure the caddis were making an appearance in the evening. Since we fished during the day we used Lime and Royal Trudes sized 14 and 16. We also used ant patterns, hoppers and Parachute Adams, as well as the regular Adams, all of which worked pretty well!

The Bull River is a special place and we hope to see you out there soon!

Feel free to call Karen at 1-800-667-2311 for fishing conditions and available days to float.

(Report #13, 2006/07/31)

The St.Mary River has found its summer groove!

So we were off to fish the St. Mary River today, choosing the Pumphouse to Wycliffe Run. The weather has recently cooled down somewhat as we are seeing daily temperatures hovering around 25 to 26 degrees Celsius (77-80 F). We are also seeing some clouds appear in the afternoon. After that run of 100 degree days last week, things seem almost cool!

The water level on the St. Mary is at its summer optimum. We are now enjoying the benefits of all that rain in June as it sustained the level even through the recent hot stretch. We did get some rain in the last couple of days which helped to cool things down, but it did not impact water levels in the River.

We floated as per usual and hopped out quite often as the River braids allot on this section. While we had two passengers in the boat, one was fishing while she just absorbed the immense amount of scenery this stretch provides. Every time we pulled up to the bigger pools we could easily see the fish were feeding on the hatch - a very nice invitation to any fly fishier!

The Pumphouse section fished well today as he caught and released about two dozen cutthroats anywhere from 14 to 18 inches in length. The couple of 17's and that big old 18 made particularly nice picture fish!

The hatch consisted mainly of Pale Morning Duns and Blue Wing Olives as it was cooler on the day. We equipped our lines with hoppers, Royal Wulffs, PMDs and Adams which all worked well.

It was one of those days where the River was in peak form for fishing, scenery or whatever nonconsumptive use you had in mind!

Hope to see you on the water soon.

(Report #12, 2006/07/28)

The Elk River is hitting its stride!!

We were off to float one of our favorite sections of the Elk River today - just below the town of Fernie B.C. The weather cooperated and the day was beautiful with temperatures reaching 31' C (88' F). A few clouds rolled in later in the day accompanied with some wind, but that is usual for the Elk River! As we put in we spied some eagles hovering above the River and we took it as a good sign. The Rockies are wonderful to view as you float down the Elk, but with all the action we had on the water today we didn't have much time to absorb the vistas!

The water is at an optimum level right now with the fish holding in their summer lays. Many structures within the River are showing up giving the fish lots of defined areas to hunt from. As per usual on this

long stretch of River, we mostly floated, but we did occasionally pull over to stretch our legs and walk up the edge to fish for cutthroats.

Much to our benefit, the fish were very active today. Every hole we anticipated would produce a fish actually did! Each angler landed around 30 cutthroats and as many fish were lost as were released! There were some really nice cutthroats landed in the 17 to 18 inch range on top of all the 15's and 16's. The Elk River fish are looking a little chunkier these days-- must be all that food on the water!

The hatch was dominated by hoppers, Caddis flies and Green Drakes. We used mostly Lime Trudes, yellow and tan hoppers, and yellow, red and orange stimulators. We also tossed a number of Green Drakes.

It was a great day of fishing for everyone, made even sweeter by the fresh raspberries on the spring salad at lunch! Yum!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

(Report #11, 2006/07/22)

The fishing is 'hot' on the Bull River!

Today we decided to try something completely different and took off to fish the section of the Bull River above the dam. In terms of the temperature it was hot, hot, hot, as we reached temperatures around the 35 degrees Celsius (98' F).

The Bull River is still running fast, but according to the local river rafters it can no longer be run from tip to tail. This means it is a good time for us to launch the Moravia and fish. There was only one angler in the boat on this trip because the ride is still somewhat technical, but with this warm weather the River is definitely manageable and it fished very well! We will have room for multiple anglers shortly.

We mainly floated and fished from the boat. On the Bull we tend to fish in the pools, or behind the rocks and along edges. On a trip to the Bull you will find yourself casting a lot. The Bull River has a lot of structure to it with many large rocks and boulders and is narrower than the St.Mary or Elk rivers. This means that the guide is forced to constantly maneuver the boat around all this stuff and there is

little time to drift. In terms of setting the raft up to cast, the guides prefer to hold the boat in one area, letting an angler cast into places that are very hard to reach from shore. That said, the guides will pull over occasionally to let you fish around and behind some of the big boulders. The scenery on this trip is quite something as the River flows along the back side of the "Steeple" which are part of the Hughes Range of the Rockies making the [views](#) spectacular!

On this trip the fish woke up around 10:00 am and started to hit the fly like crazy. There were lots of fish caught in the 10 to 14 inch range, but we did catch a couple of nice 16 inchers! On the day the angler caught about 50 fish!

Now that the stone fly hatch is pretty much over, the hoppers and caddis flies are out and about in strong numbers. In fact the hoppers are pretty well everywhere! We responded with hoppers of course, but we also used a lot of the traditional patterns including; Royal Trudes, Adams, Red and Yellow Humpies, as well as our trusty Stimulators which are still working very well!

Today we enjoyed some fantastic fishing in a truly spectacular outdoor setting. It was a great summer day on the Bull River!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

For more information: Call Karen at the Fly Shop for information on how the rivers are fishing and the available days for booking a float. She can be reached at 1-800-667-2311.

(Report #10, 2006/07/20)

The 'Mission to Fort Steele' run is sunny and hot!

Our float of choice today was the 'Mission to Fort Steele ' stretch of the St.Mary River. Again the weather was sunny and clear, a beautiful day with temperatures reaching 32 degrees Celsius (pushing 90 Fahrenheit).

The River on this bottom stretch of the St. Mary was changed quite a bit from this spring's freshet. We are now seeing a lot of good water to fish as there are many new braids and back channels that gives an angler a tremendous amount of choice.

As usual, we floated most of the time as we traversed the spectacular runs and pools of this section. We hopped out of the Moravia to fish individual spots and once we caught some nice fish we jumped back in. We then continued our glide towards the spectacular view of the Rockies that stretched out before us.

We fished for the wild west slope cutthroats and had lots of success as about 45 cutthroats we landed and released between the two anglers. We also caught six cut-bows 'cutthroat-rainbow hybrids' which were quite jumpy and scrappy as they fell into the 16 to 17 inch range. They were nice fighting fish. Some of the fish we caught were very fat and healthy which was nice to see. The cutthroats that we landed were between 14 to 16 inches.

In terms of insects: hopper, hoppers, and a few more hoppers! The fields were loaded with them and the fish like those big guys as a meal. Size 14 is a good call.

We fished with Lime and Royal Trudes, hoppers of course, Adams, red and orange stimulators and ants (both traditional and foam). Most the flies were sized 12 to 16.

We had a great day on the St.Mary and so can you, just give us a call at 1-800-667-2311.

Hope to see you on the River soon!

Seen and Heard: Make sure you have all the proper licenses when out on the rivers as the Conservation Officers are out there checking on a regular basis!

(Report #9, 2006/07/14)

St. Mary Report: The Pumphouse to Wycliffe run is crystal clear!

Our trip out today was the Pumphouse to Wycliffe run on the St. Mary River. The weather was beautiful with only a few floating high clouds to mark the vistas. There was some wind, but not anything like the other day on the Elk River!

The St. Mary River is now completely clear and dropping a little every day as the summer conditions are here! Some of the back channels are getting too low to float so we are spending more time on the main stem, pulling over to walk up the back channels when they look particularly promising.

With the closing up of the side channels we got out of the boat quite a bit today. At one point a mother deer and her two fawns walked right out in front of us to slurp a drink of water from the River. We also observed a sparring match between a kingfisher and an eagle fighting over prime fishing locations. Thank God we never have to compete like that for space on the St. Mary!

Today this section of the St. Mary fished great. During the half-day float the 2 anglers caught and released 20 wild westslope cutthroats. A couple of really nice 16 inch cuts were landed. Hopefully those photos will turn out to be as nice as those fish were.

We are still seeing a lot of stone flies on the water, as well as a good selection of Yellow Sallys. The grass hoppers are now out dominating in the fields so I am sure the fish will be keying on them in the near future. Today we tossed the Adams, Royal Wulff's, orange and yellow stimulators - sized 12 and 14.

We had a great day on the River and expect many more this season!

Hope to see you on the water - or in the shop soon.

(Report #8, 2006/07/13)

The Elk River Report: things are windy but productive!

Today we floated one of the lower sections of the Elk River. The day started off as usual with temperatures in the mid 20's (mid 70's Fahrenheit), but by mid afternoon we were fishing in a stiff wind.

The Elk River has definitely cleared up in the last week. The nice sunny weather we have been experiencing has helped as the River is dropping a little more everyday and the fish are settling into their summer grooves. The River still has a tinge of green to it, but the fish do not seem to mind at all as they are feeding steadily.

Today we fished mostly from the boat as we floated one of the longer sections. We did pull over a few times to take a shot at a few of the more promising runs. We were focusing on wild westslope cutthroats and we did see and land some nice fish on the day. Between the two anglers close to 50 cuts were caught with a couple of particularly nice ones in the 16 to 17 inch slot. The wind really picked up in the afternoon, but we still had a very good day!

Yellow Sally's and Green Drakes - sized 12 and 14 - were coming off the River. We responded with an assortment of dries including: stonefly attractor patterns, foam ants, Royal Wulff's, Green Drakes, as well as Lime Trudes and Parachute Adams.

Hope to see on the River soon.

PS If you are traveling in south eastern British Columbia and thinking about a float trip, or just looking for some information about the rivers around us, feel free to drop into the St. Mary Angler Fly Shop for a chat.

(Report #7, 2006/07/06)

The Elk River is ready to fish!

Today we set out for the Rockies to fish the lower section of the Elk River for the first time this season. The weather was sunny, highs to 30 degrees Celsius (86 F) with thundershowers building in late afternoon. Fortunately, we received only a small amount of rain near the end of the day.

The water conditions are still pretty 'green' on the Elk with about four feet of visibility. However, levels are dropping a little more each day and soon they will be in their regular summer range. The Elk usually takes a little longer to clear as there are many mountain tributaries which feed it. That said, it is definitely fishable already!

Today our strategy was to float the bigger/swifter sections and pull over occasionally to fish the runs that have just recently formed up. In terms of the fishing, we had a pretty good day as we released about 30 cutthroats between two anglers. We also landed a hefty 24 inch bull trout that made for a nice 'picture fish'. The average 'cut' caught was in the 15 inch range.

The hatch consisted of Stone Flies, in addition to some Yellow Sally's coming off. We used an assortment of flies including: Royal Wulff's, Lime Trudes, Parachute Adams, Stone Fly patterns, as well as some big attractor patterns of various sizes (8 - 14). As it was our first time out we wanted to try many different patterns.

The day proved to be a good one as the weather was beautiful and everyone had a great time out on our first trip down the Elk this season.

Hope to see you here in the Kootenays soon!

Karen and Kelly
1-800-667-2311

PS Don't forget that all of British Columbia is 'one fly only' and there are 'no droppers' allowed. Feel free to check out the [weather](#) in our area!

(Report #6, 2006/06/25)

The St.Mary River is ready to float!

Today was a beautiful early summer day to go floating down the St. Mary River in search of the magical westslope cutthroats. There was little wind and temperatures reached 30 degrees Celsius (86 F). We have now stored away our lake rods and pulled out the lighter gear for river fishing (8'6 or 9 foot 4 or 5 weight fly rods).

Since it is only our second time out this season, we decided ahead of time to float the two middle sections of the River to see how things are shaping up. We put in at the Pumphouse and floated past the Wycliffe takeout all the way to the St. Eugene Mission. The downside of fishing such a long stretch of River in one day is that if you hit a really hot hole, you can't afford to linger too long!

The River is still moving pretty fast, but we quickly noticed that the elevation has dropped over a foot and half in the last week. The gravel and cobble islands are starting to show themselves and the side channels are beginning to be defined.

Over the course of the last week the clarity of the water has improved significantly downstream of the S-Bends where last week we observed an eroding bank. The River has since stopped undercutting the bank and the water is now pretty clear with only a slight green tinge to it. Soon we will be into summer water levels.

While we floated down our first stretch of the River the scenery was striking. We observed many ospreys flying above and fishing below, as well as a huge bald eagle hunting ducks on the wing.

In terms of flies, we started by running one of our stone fly patterns as this insect was everywhere on the day. We saw at least 20 fish come to our dries. Of course we changed patterns quite a bit as we are still in the early season research mode. We tried Royal Wulff's, various caddis patterns and Parachute Adams. We were bound and determined to see exactly which patterns were working this time of year! After using all the different flies we concluded that using pretty well any big attractor pattern seemed to be the key.

We brought two hybridized 'cutbow's' to the boat in the 16 inch range. One of the cutbows was actually being chased by a big bull trout - that sure got our attention!

On the day we released about 15 cutthroats, the average size in the 12 to 14 inch slot. The cutthroats are still finding their summer lies and some of the big guys are hanging around up in the back channels. We did see a couple of those big guys - 16 to 17 inchers - but we never managed to get them to the boat.

Still many of the back channels are holding water, making it a great fishing opportunity. Our choice is to get out of the boat and walk up the channels to fish. We will be doing this a lot in the next few weeks. However, after the water drops the fish will move back into to the main channel and spend their summer sipping dries!

The St. Mary River is rounding into form. We hope to see you up in our area as the river dry fly fishing has begun!!

Too the East: The Elk River has started to fish well, visibility is around 2 to 3 feet and slowly clearing. Unlike the St. Mary, the Elk River never really clears perfectly, but that does not stop the great fishing! We will be heading over to the Elk in the near future.

Coming and Going: Just a reminder that *you do not need a Passport* to get into Canada! Your birth certificate and driver's license will suffice. Call us at 1-800-667-2311 if you have any travel or fishing questions.

(Report #5, 2006/06/18)

Test Float 2006: the St.Mary is getting close!

The St.Mary River opened on June 15th so we took the first opportunity we could to hit the water. Our 'rubber tire reconnaissance' had told us that the water was high, but clean on the top end of the system, with it turning darker green somewhere downstream. So we put in at St.Mary Lake with the intention of doing more investigation of the river's new fit and feel than fishing. Our plan was to drift the top two sections of the St.Mary and pullout at Wycliffe.

The weather on this day was dry with a mix of sun and cloud. The temperature peaked at a pleasant 20 degrees Celsius (68 F). The Lake was high, but clear and calm, perfect for putting in. We made our way along the top section of the river amidst higher water levels, but with excellent visibility. This section of the River is almost ready to fish!

As we moved down through the 'Lake to Pump House' section, we could see that the freshet had definitely changed the Rivers' makeup. Some of the previous years' log jams had washed away and a number of newly uprooted and toppled trees had grounded out at various river turns, bends and gravel bars. The River had completed it annual renewal once more just as it has done since the end of the ice

age. With the changes in the river morphology the gravels and cobbles in the river were resorted and the habitat for the River's West slope cutthroats refreshed.

So how did it fish you ask? Since the River is still pretty high it is probably a week away from being 'fishable'. And a couple of weeks away from being 'pretty good' barring any major spring rain events. On this day it fished as one would have expected as we landed a handful of 'little guys'. That said, we were very pleasantly surprised when we hooked and landed a beautiful male cutthroat in the 16 + inch

category! It was a powerful reminder that these beautiful fish are still in there lurking in the deep water waiting for the levels to drop and the new channels and pools to form so they can grab their summer lie.

After we made it down past the S-Bends, which is located below the Pump House in the second section of the four reaches of the River, we found out what was turning the water from crystal clear to deep green. As it turns out the River is still undercutting a bank here as one of its last tasks of the freshet. Once the St.Mary falls another 6-12 inches it will be into the cobbles and the erosion will stop. To date the River is down about 2 feet from last week and probably down a total of three vertical feet from its peak this spring.

In terms of hatches observed during our float, we only noticed a small hatch of golden stone flies... nothing large enough to bring the fish up. We were casting mostly big orange stone flies.

All in all it was a great ride. It was great to experience the beauty of the River's scenery again, the osprey and golden eagles, the hoodoos and the mountains. And catching that nice cut was a bonus. We anticipate the river to be fishable within a week. As the St. Mary River has been renewed once more we look forward to another fantastic year of fishing and hope you get a chance to experience it as well!

See you on the River soon.

Call Kelly or Karen at 1-800-667-2311 to find out about fishing conditions or available days for booking a trip.

(Report #4, 2006/06/09)

The 400 pounder that got away!

On our latest trip, we fished the Mitten chain of lakes which is located two hours north of Kimberley. When we arrived we immediately rigged up our gear, put the boat in the water and started to fish. The weather was warm with little wind, a comfortable 18 degrees Celsius (65 Fahrenheit).

We settled our boat along a drop-off ledge and immediately noticed the water was full of food - lots and lots of shrimp, scuds and leeches. We also could see the chironomids were just starting to hatch, in addition to the odd Callibaetis mayfly. The color of the lake was a 'foreboding' tannic, so it made it hard to see very far into the water column, but we decided to give it a shot any ways.

Throughout the morning we fished chironomids, leeches, damsels, dragon flies and bead head patterns - everything we could think of and we only had one aggressive pull! We did not even see one fish rise, let alone eye them swimming in the shallows!

It was very tough fishing indeed, so after lunch we decided to leave for another nearby lake. As we were driving up and over a hill we turned the corner to see a huge grizzly bear standing up on its hind legs looking right at us - silver tips and all! Consensus in the truck was that it must be over 400 pounds! That said, no one was going to get close enough to find out. It quickly dropped, turned, and took off into the bush running a top speed! We were just glad to be in a vehicle.

Shortly after our encounter with 'The Griz' we arrived at the second lake. After scouting the area for cubs, we put to the water. The first thing we noticed was that the water was clear and had a nice greenish blue tint to it. So we were encouraged given the water color and production of the first lake.

As we positioned ourselves once more along a drop off ledge and began to unhook our chironomid setups, two fish jumped about 15 feet from the boat. As quickly as we could we tossed a cast to the rise, let the chironomid sink and slowly started striping in the line. We intently watched the strike indicator as it got closer to the boat and then wham!, we had our first fish of the afternoon and the day! It is always a tough decision to pack up and move to another lake, but on this occasion it was the right choice.

We managed to catch and release about 6 to 8 fish each, with a good average size of 18 to 20 inches. These fish seemed particularly chunky and were quite aggressive. These particular fish are 'triploids' and they grow big very quickly. Our biggest fish on the day was 24 inches. During the course of the afternoon we broke off 4 or 5 fish each. We eventually had to up the tippet to 3X - 8 pounds.

After a slow morning we had a great afternoon and the day turned out to be very successful indeed.

We hope you are getting out on the water this spring!

(Report #3, 2006/06/07)

River Report: it is early, but things are looking good!

All the rivers of Region 4 in Southeastern British Columbia will be opening June 15th! That makes the staff here at the St. Mary Angler very excited.

A couple of weeks ago we experienced an extended period of hot weather and subsequently much of the low elevation snow disappeared. The rivers were in full freshet for a while, but the levels have started to slowly come down and clear. That said, everyday is a little different as river conditions can change given the daily weather.

Soon we will be doing a test float to see if the St. Mary River has cut any new channels, undermined any banks, created new islands or deposited any log jams. Hopefully we will get out this coming Sunday, so stay tuned for a report on the early season 'fit and feel' of the St. Mary.

We are very optimistic about the upcoming season given the early freshet and the look of the river today. Early in the season we will be offering a half day float in one of our pontoon boats for **\$395.00** CanD. (1 or 2 people).

If you have any questions about our services, available dates for guided fishing, or the conditions of the rivers or lakes, feel free to call us here at the St. Mary Angler Fly Shop and we will be glad to answer your questions!

Hope to talk to you soon,

Karen and Kelly
1-800-667-2311 angler@telus.net

(Report #2, 2006/05/23)

The freshet is peaking while the lakes remain productive!

The lakes have been open for over a month now and the campers and day fishers have been experiencing good success on the water. When the wind and weather are cooperating, you can have a lot of fun out there!

In the last week we have had some very warm temperatures which led to rising rivers and some flooding of adjacent fields, as well as some homes. On the positive side, the low lying snow pack has all but disappeared and much of the freshet is on its way through the system. The early spring freshet is beneficial for fishers like us because the sooner the freshet peaks, the better the conditions for early season fishing on the rivers when they open on June 15th.

Along with the runoff caused by the warm weather came a huge hatch of black ants - you know, the flying kind! If you managed to be fishing the lakes on one of those days you were in for a real treat. When the ants are out you can target the rising fish as they key in on these tasty treats. As usual, the real challenge is to get them to hit your fly on a water surface strewn with feed and to get onto the water before the fish have gorged themselves. If your timing and technique are right, the fun is all yours.

We ventured out onto Premier Lake on the Victoria Day long weekend (May 20-22) and enjoyed ourselves immensely. The black ant hatch had peaked a few days earlier so we were hoping to catch the tail end. After launching around 11.00 a.m., we headed up the lake and tucked ourselves into a protected bay and set things up. We positioned the boat close to a drop off ledge with our backs to the wind and casted our chironomid rigs. We started by casting towards shore and worked our way into the deeper water. We have learned over the years that if you are not touching any fish at first, then lengthen your leader, continually change your fly, and cast out into deeper water as the rainbows might not be in too close to shore.

On this day the fishing started off slowly, so we experimented with a few different chironomids patterns before the action picked up. In order to get a handle on what was working we had one of our rods strung with a wet line and we tried a variety of critters including; leeches, doc spratley's, zug bugs, half & full backs and damsel flies. We were not going to let anything go untried on this day!

After the strong black ant hatch we were wondering if the fish would be feeding much. So after catching the first fish of the day we pumped the contents of the stomach and were surprised to find it full of red, black and green chironomids. It was nice to see that even after the huge ant hatch the fish were still stuffing themselves with a variety of chironomids.

In terms of the fishing, we were fortunate once again to catch a nice, 'chunky', brook trout. It was about 3 pounds and 17-18 inches long, a very nice fish. This was in addition to landing some nice rainbows (6-7 per fisher) all in the 15 to 17 inch range. We packed things up around 4.00 p.m. and headed back into Kimberley.

All in all it was a satisfying day out on the lake where we enjoyed the sun and splendor of the setting, in addition to the fishing. What a way to celebrate the Queens Birthday!

Take care. We hope to see you on the water or in the shop soon!

PS We will be fishing Whiteswan Lake in the near future as soon as it has finished turning over and sorted itself out. So stay tuned for another lake fishing report. If you have a preferred time to fish with us please give Kelly or Karen a call at 1-800-667-2311 as the prime times are starting to fill up.

(Report #1, 2006/04/28)

Spring is here, the lakes are open, so off we go again!

The skies are clear, the weather is warming and spring is in the air. As usual everyone is 'chomping at the bit' to get the lines wet on any of the myriad of lakes in the Kootenay region. Unless you were blessed and traveled south to fish this winter, you will be like the rest of us - keenly eyeing the recession of the ice from the lakes. In the last week some of the locals have tried to push the envelope by traversing the remaining ring of ice around some of the lakes with their pontoon boats. Things can get a little crazy this time of year as fishers clamour to hit the water for the first time!

Here at the Fly Shop we have seen many people on their way to short camping and fishing trips since some lakes opened on April 15th (the rest open on May 1st). We have had a chance to head up to Premier Lake to fish a few times already, and yes the chironomid hatches have commenced. Using the chironomid fishing technique is very effective this time of year because they make up about 80% of the fish's diet. In addition to chironomids; the leech patterns, wooley buggers, half backs and full backs are starting to work well on sinking lines.

The rainbows are starting to move from the deep water to the shallow area which is when fishing with chironomids can get 'smokin' hot.' Our latest trip to Premier was successful with each of us landing 8 to 10 rainbows and a couple nice 17 inch brook trout. All the rainbows are bright and healthy looking, as they fell into the 15 to 18 inch slot.

As we were leaving the lake it looked like it was just starting to 'turn over'. So we will keep you posted on the progress of Premier and the other lakes in our area as we move through the spring lake fishing season.

Take care and good fishing in 2006!

Pontoon Notes: We are currently taking bookings, so if you have a preferred time to fish with us please give Kelly or Karen a call at 1-800-667-2311 as the prime times will fill up fast in the next month