

- Fishing Report
- June
- July
- August
- Sept.
- October

2008 Season in Review.

As most anglers are aware, the quality of fishing in any year is influenced by the amount and timing of precipitation throughout the year. The amount of snowfall we received last winter was just around the long term average for the Kootenay Region. In terms of the spring runoff, most of our rivers experienced highest flows in late May, but experienced no significant flooding. Rainfall throughout the season was below average from May through September. The daily temperatures for a second year in a row were close to normal except for July where it was two degrees Celsius warmer than the long term average. What this all meant for us is that, once again we were blessed with good weather.

We experienced many hot, clear, beautiful days throughout the summer and good weather on into October. Even though we had the combination of lower rainfall and increased temperatures, we received enough timely precipitation that the flows in the St.Mary and Elk rivers remained O.K. We started fishing the lakes in mid May, hit the rivers in mid June and wrapped up our season in mid October. The quality of the fishing was good throughout the 2008 season.

Rainfall (millimetres):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Rainfall in 2008	34.2 mm	36.2 mm	29.6 mm	28.6 mm	18 mm
Rainfall in 2007	67.0 mm	60.8 mm	18 mm	10 mm	12 mm
Average Monthly Rainfall (long term)	42.6 mm	52.7	38.2 mm	31.6 mm	27.3 mm

Temperature (Celsius):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Temperature in 2008	18.4 C	21.6 C	27.5 C	25.7 C	20.4 C
Temperature in 2007	18.4 C	22.1 C	31.4 C	26.3 C	19.7 C
Average Daily Max. Temperature (long term)	17.7 C	21.6 C	25.6 C	25.4 C	19.6 C

We usually start fishing our favourite alpine lakes on May 1st. but this year due to cooler temperatures

at higher elevations, we did not get out till May 19th. That said, our first trip to Premier Lake saw temperatures in the mid 80's (30C), excellent water clarity and no wind...what a way to start. Under these near perfect conditions the season started with a bang as we caught and released over 50 fish with rainbows over 18 inches and a particularly handsome looking brook trout stretching 16. The chironomids were so plentiful they were still hanging from the mouths of the fish as we were releasing them! The cooler spring weather helped to prolong the good quality lake fishing into June. The cooler temperatures kept the fish up in the water column and encouraged active feeding. The hatches remained frequent, tempting the fish to feed heavily whenever they were active. By mid June we were starting to turn our gaze to the dry fly fishing opportunities on the rivers of southeastern B.C.

Since the lakes were a couple of weeks behind schedule, the rivers were as well. So after a couple of test floats down the St.Mary in mid June our guides declared the River ready to float on the 25th. While we did not see a large freshet, or much flooding this spring, the River did show some signs of change with a bank eroded here and a new bunch of logs stacked up over there.

We took our first group of clients down the St.Mary's "Pumphouse to Wycliffe run" on July 6th. The weather was lovely at 73 F (23C) with lots of sun and only the occasional light shower. Right of way we could see there were a lot of fish in the system. By July 13th the fish had found their summer lies and the dry fly fishing was getting good. The water clarity was excellent and the gravel bars were exposed enough for some quality bank fishing. By mid month the Elk River was also ready to go with good catch rates and cuts being recorded in the 14 to 15 inch slot with a few nice 17 inchers being landed. By the third week of July the St.Mary was in its summer groove with temperatures in the 80's and dry fly fishing that was scorching hot. On the 21st two anglers released 50 fish in the 12 to 15 inch range with a few running over 17. By now the stone fly hatches had slowed, but the grasshoppers were on the verge of their summer population explosion. By the end of July the St.Mary and Elk were fishing very well and the Bull River was also providing some excellent fishing fun.

We started August with a trip to the lower Elk River amidst hot weather, clear skies and no wind. Under these prime conditions the angler had a spectacular day as he landed around 40 cutthroats, the largest pushed the tape to about 18 inches. There was a rumour the angler was claiming a sore arm after that effort, but no angler will ever admit that on the record! Over on the St.Mary the grasshoppers were now dominating the menu and the fish were responding accordingly. On one trip the two anglers nailed 5 cutthroat over seventeen inches sporting some brilliant summer colours in addition to many smaller fish. Then there was another trek to the beautiful Bull River. Again the weather was great and the Bull did not disappoint with its mix of remoteness, spectacular scenery and abundant cutthroat.

September started off a little cooler as the streak of hot weather was broken. The benefit of the milder weather was it helped hold the water levels a little higher in our rivers. On the 4th we decided to hike into the Skookumchuck River Canyon again. The water of the 'Skook' was crystal clear – it was perfect for casting a fly and watching the fish rise for it, Our approach was to hike along the bank edges, fish a pool for awhile, then hike to the next tasty looking pool, casting in between the rocks and structure to find some nice big cutthroats. We had a lot of fun as the two anglers caught and released 35 cuts with 5 bigger cuts in the 17 inch class. We continued to fish the Elk with some big catch days pushing over 30 fish per angler and with some monster 18 inch cutthroats showing up. We fished the St.Mary a lot in September, especially the Canyon stretch which produced some great results, along with the Skookumchuck, the Bull and the Elk.

We continued to fish after October 1st all the way to mid month. As the temperatures cooled as we moved into fall, it meant we started a little later and finished a little earlier in the day. We really enjoyed having the rivers pretty well to ourselves! The scenery was spectacular as we fished amongst the brilliant palette that makes up the fall in the east Kootenays. The fishing remained productive until we shut things down mid October.

So there you have it, another year in review. 2008 was a great year for dry fly fishing on the St.Mary,

Elk, Skookumchuck and Bull rivers. We had very good weather on the whole, as the rain stayed away a little more than usual. The season started a little late, the rivers produced very well throughout, and finished 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 2009 trips now.

We will be attending tradeshows in the New Year and hope to see you there. Check www.stmaryangler.com for dates, locations and contact us for will call tickets if you will be attending.

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 and Karen Laatsch,
St.Mary Angler

2008 FISHING REPORTS

((Report #22, 2008/10/02))

While the mornings are cool and the colours are changing, the fishing remains productive on the Bull River!

The drive up to the Bull River was our destination on this fall day. Since the morning was again brisk, we started the trip later than we would earlier in the season. That said, the skies were clear blue and the temperature reached a very comfortable 15°C by the afternoon (60°F). When the sun is out the temperature feels great. The mountain peaks are now dusted in snow and the trees are all turning their beautiful fall colours of dark orange, yellow and brown so we are definitely in the midst of autumn.

This time of year you want to wear your waders and dress in layers so you have the option of taking off a garment or two when the direct sun makes things hot.

The Bull River is at it's fall low level now, but definitely is still floatable and fishable! On this trip the guys spent most of the time floating the River and fishing from the boat. They dry fly fished all day as the cutthroats were coming to the surface and feeding. The approach of choice was to cast from the boat along the bank edges and behind rocks into those nicely formed pools. Given the cooler temperatures of the fall, the fish don't move as much at this time of year, so it is very important to get a good drift right over their feeding lanes in order to entice them!

Once the air and water temperatures heated up after lunch, the fish became very active. The two anglers caught and released about 40 cutthroats between them. The biggest fish was a nice plump 16 inch cut with a very colourful body and that signature bright orange slash. On the insect front, we observe a small hatch of Blue Winged Olives, as well as some size 18 Gray Duns and a few Green Drakes coming off. Caddis flies in yellow and orange, Blue Winged Olives (sizes 16 to 18), H&L Variants and Royal Wulffs (sizes 14 to 18), worked well on the day and are pretty typical flies for this time of year.

So there you have it - beautiful fall weather and great fishing against the snow covered peaks of the Rockies. It doesn't get much better than that!

Hope to see you on the water soon!

Kelly

(Report #21, 2008/09/19)

Skookumchuck River is 'backcountry beautiful'!

Our destination this fall day was the Skookumchuck River. We started out a little later in the morning to avoid the cool temperatures, which tend to reduce cutthroat activity anyways. So we grabbed a coffee and headed up to the Skookumchuck via Canal Flats. On the way we saw a big black bear on the road – a nice site from the safety of our truck! The good weather continued with a deep blue sky. The weather this past week has been just amazing and today was no exception as temperatures reached a high of 26 C°, which is nearly 80°F!

The conditions on the ‘Skook’ are now marked by clean and clear riffles, flowing into pools and nice pocket water. The conditions are near perfect for September.

Once we arrived to the trailhead, we quickly set up our rods and put our lunch packs on, then started the walk back into the canyon. Given the shorter days of this time of year, we hiked deep into the canyon first, and then fished our way back to the truck. The last thing we want to do with these shorter days is to end our fishing late in the day far from the truck. We have no desire to walk back through this remote canyon at dusk or in the early evening.

Today the fishing was very good... again. Each angler caught and released about 20 cutthroats. The cuts right now are at their zenith in terms of colour. They are sporting bright orange bellies and that deep red slash on their gills is radiating - they are just striking to look at. They are also chunky and well rounded, almost ready for winter.

We caught a couple really nice size cuts at 16 to 17 inches in length. These fish are so good at hiding in the water with their natural camouflage that you definitely need a good set of polarized sunglasses to see the rise in the pools.

In terms of hatches; some Green Drakes, Blue Winged Olives, as well as small Grey Duns were active. That said, we used a caddis fly sized 14 to 16 to regularly roll and catch fish. The Blue Winged Olive also worked well when the hatch was coming off. The fish now are just coming to the surface and slurping the bugs off the top of the water. Sometimes you can see the whole side of the body as they emerge to take your fly.

Today the combination of the walk through the remote valley, the warm day, abundant bird life and great fishing made for a spectacular fall experience on the Skookumchuck River.

We are still actively guiding into mid-October so if you have the time to come up, just give me a call to set it up at 1-800-667-2311.

Take care

Kelly

PS Do remember to read the fishing regulations before you head out. As of September parts of the Skookumchuck and the Wigwam rivers are closed to protect the spawning Bull Trout. So please ensure you are not in areas that are closed to fishing!

(Report #20, 2008/09/16)

Elk River Report: September Spectacular!

Today we floated the Elk River from Fernie to the Morrissey Bridge. We had a very good run and saw only a few bank anglers and a couple other boats in the section all day.

The high pressure system that has settled over the East Kootenays is making for some beautiful weather. While the morning started out quite cool - around 8°C (67°F) - by mid afternoon it reached a high of 27 °C (81 F) without a cloud in the sky. The trees are now turning their fall colors. A magnificently bright orange and yellow brightens up the bank edges now. Today the sun was so bright we needed to have a set of good quality polarized sunglasses in order to see the fish rising for our flies.

The water conditions are perfect now in terms of flow and clarity. The fish must know winter is coming because they are feeding on the surface and taking the dry fly like crazy!

On this trip we mostly floated; fishing the bank edges, behind rocks and structure and in the fast ripple water. When we came across a particularly nice run, we would get out of the boat and work it. One angler would head down river and the other would work the run in the opposite direction.

Today the fishing was 'September Spectacular'. It seemed like the fish were rising to every cast. On these special days the only thing holding you back from catching a lot of fish is your ability to hook up and land the fish. Of course we only count the landed fish and today between the two anglers they caught 65 fish - about 30 to 35 each!

Many of the fish landed were in the nice 14 to 15 inch range, but we did catch a couple of nice 17 to 18 inch cutthroats as well. One particular fish was only 14 inches long, but looked like a football!

The hatches included Blue Winged Olives, Green Drakes and Caddis, but nothing of real significance in terms of abundance. The fish were feeding aggressively and they were not keying on the hatch that much. So if the angler got a good drift, he was bound to get some action. We only really used a couple of types of flies today because they worked so well. This included a size 14 caddis and ant patterns - sizes 12 to 16.

The fly-fishing at this time of year is great. Along with the great fishing there are virtually no people on the water and weather can be fabulous!

Hope to see you on the water in the next couple of weeks.

Take Care

Kelly

(Report #19, 2008/09/09)**Elk River Report: the warm weather returns with some spectacular fishing!**

It was over to the Elk River today where we floated from below the Town of Fernie to the Morrissey Bridge. After the drive from Kimberley we quickly had the boats in the water and were eager to start the day. The weather was just fabulous as we had rich blue skies with the fall chill in the morning air warming up to around 20° Celsius by mid afternoon (70°F). There was very little wind which is what we like to see. All in all it was a wonderful September day against the backdrop of just a few trees beginning their fall transition!

The Elk River water level is holding well due to the cool weather over the last few weeks. The bonus is that the fish are not stressed out by low water conditions and the accompanying higher temperatures. The water is crystal clear and there are still many nice log jams and pools providing structure for holding fish.

We floated quite a bit of the morning so we could make our way down to some nice pools in the afternoon where we could spend some quality time. We dry fly fished all day and it was spectacular.

On this float the Elk fish were on. They were eagerly feeding on the surface so each angler caught around 30 cuts with the size averaging from 13 to 15 inches. We pulled a few 17's, as well as an 18 incher from the deep pools. The 18 inch cut was indeed a beauty, very chunky and well fed. It had nice colours with a rich red slash under its gills. These Elk fish like to take the fly very slowly and a good drift is essential on this River. They won't even look at the fly if you don't get a good drift. While you may catch a few smaller fish without a good drift, the big guys won't even look at it because they see a lot more angler pressure compared to that naive bunch of cuts over on the St. Mary River!

The hatches on the day were numerous including: small Gray Duns, Blue Winged Olives, Caddis and Green Drakes. We responded with 'blue wings', Elk Hair Caddis, a beetle pattern, and of course, Chernobyl Ants and Green Drakes.

We had a great fall day on the River and the warmer temperature seemed to bring everything back to life! Welcome to fall in the Rockies.

Lunch Viewing:

As we sat down for lunch we looked up River to see a group of Elk crossing the water. It included a big bull Elk leading the way, truly spectacular. Of course the cameras came out to take pictures of these majestic animals in the wild!

Call 1-800-6672311 to book a fall float on the river.

Take care,

**(Report #18, 2008/09/04)****Grey Baetis, Green Drakes and Blue Winged Olives make for some fun fishing on**

~~Grey Baetis, Green Drakes and Blue Winged Olives make for some fun fishing on~~
the Skookumchuck River.

Today we decided to hike into the Skookumchuck River canyon. We have fished the Skookumchuck a few times this year and it has always proved to be spectacular, so we were off again. The drive from Kimberley is about one and a half hours so we left quite early in the morning. After we parked and readied our equipment at the trail head, we then disappeared into the back country of the Skookumchuck for the day.

The preliminary weather report looked like high clouds which would burn off as the day progressed. As it turned out the clouds stayed around all day and the temperature never got much higher than 17° Celsius (63°F). We had light rain on and off all day, but we dressed for the weather so it did not seem to bother us. We completely forgot about the rain once the fishing turned out to be very good.

The water levels are normal for this time of year. We hiked down to the first pool and peered into the crystal clear water – it was perfect for casting a fly and watching the fish rise for it! Our approach was to hike along the bank edges, fish a pool for awhile, then hike to the next tasty looking pool, casting in between the rocks and structure to find some nice big cutthroats. Again we had to remind ourselves to let the cutthroats ‘take the fly’. It is different than fishing for rainbows where you lift the rod immediately upon the strike to set the hook. With cuts you must be patient enough to let the fish take the fly and start to swim away before you lift the rod, otherwise you will pull the bug right out of the mouth!

The fish seemed very active during our time on the River today. Between the two anglers they caught and released 35 fish which is pretty impressive for a walk and wade where you have to spend a lot of time moving from pool to pool on foot. The average size caught was 14 to 15 inches, but we did see a number of nice chunky fish as well. We caught and released about 5 bigger cuts in the 17 inch range. They were nice looking, chunky fish that definitely made the day exciting.

The hatches coming off today included Grey Baetis, Green Drakes and Blue Winged Olives. That is what is exciting about this time of year, the cooler weather pops these different types of hatches off and the fish are left with lots to choose from.

In terms of techniques, we started off the day nymphing until it warmed up enough for the hatches to come off. So we used a Beadhead Copper John to start things off and it worked very well. Then we went to the dry flies including; Parachute Adams, Blue Winged Olives, H&L Variants and of course, the Green Drakes to ‘match the hatch’ (sizes 14 to 18). They were small, but very effective. You may not be able to see these smaller flies, so just watch for the rise and lift. It could be your fish or not, but it is great just to have the opportunity to try!

Hope to see you on the River this fall.

Take care,

Kelly

1-800-667-2311

((Report #17, 2008/09/03))

The St. Mary Report: things are cooling off but the River is still providing lots of excitement.

Our float today was from the Kimberley Golf Course down to the bridge at Wycliffe. The morning started out quite cool as the weather has turned towards fall. The morning temperature began at 6° Celsius (43°F) and warmed to around 18° Celsius (65°F) by the end of the float.

The afternoon brought in quite a lot of cloud cover with some rain, but the fish still came up to eat the bugs on the surface. When the weather changes the fish change their feeding patterns, but they still eat. Our challenge is to find what they want!

With the last couple of weeks in August being unseasonably cool, the water levels on the St.Mary River have held up very nicely. That said, it still gets quite low as the River braids a fair bit throughout the lower part of the system. Overall the whole River has been fishing very steady and good throughout the summer. Lately the kokanee have come up into the St.Mary and are spawning. They are not at all interested in feeding, so they pretty much ignore our fly unless they get upset and try to attack it so we rarely ever catch a kokanee in the River. Today the water temperature started at 59°F and only went up to 61°F by the end of day (15 to 16°C).

We mainly floated today, getting out to fish from shore on occasion. The fish were up and feeding all day, but some of the time they were only "short striking" the fly. This occurs when we think the fish has taken the fly and the rod is lifted accordingly, but the fish is gone. Under this circumstance you have to find the fly that the fish wants badly and doesn't just come up and bump it. On the day about 20 fish were caught mostly in the 14 to 15 inch range. The big fish were tough on us today as they only came up to bump the fly. We had a couple of 17 inchers on but they popped off before they actually got to the boat... too bad close only counts in horseshoes!

In terms of the hatch, we saw some mayflies and blue winged olives, as well the October caddis on the move. We used flies that imitated the October caddis such as stimulators (orange and yellow), chernobyl ant patterns, parachute adams, caddis, red and orange humpies and some blue winged olives. The sizes ranged from 8's down to a size 16.

As we floated down the St.Mary today we saw a big black bear moving along the bank edge feasting on the spawning kokanee. Wow, that was really cool. As we continued our float we spooked a group of hunters who had bagged a Bull Elk with bow and arrow. There was lots of excitement on the River today.

Looking Downstream: Fall seems to be here, or at least it feels like it is for now since the leaves have yet to turn, but it is a beautiful time of year to fish in the Kootenays. So if you can free up the time, come and experience the area without the crowds of summer.

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take care,



1-800-667-2311

(Report #16 2008/08/26)

(Report #15, 2008/08/15)

The St. Mary Report: the weather is mixed but the River still produces.

Today we floated the bottom section of the St. Mary River from the Mission to Fort Steel, pulling out near the confluence with the Kootenay River. The weather these past few days have 'gone south' so to speak! We never know what we are going to get in a day - be it sun, rain, wind and oh yes, especially on the Elk River, hail! That is what happened today over on the Elk. But for the most part the Kimberley area had sun, a little wind and some clouds. This can make things very interesting, as the fish do not like to feed on the surface under these variable conditions.

The water on the lower section of the St. Mary is now at normal depth with excellent clarity. There are many channels and braids on the bottom section where we must get out of the boat if we are to sample all the good areas.

Our game-plan today was to float the top portion of the section, then as we got further down to get out of the boat and fish along the various channels by foot. The shallow runs on the lower part can hold a great number of fish. In fact, when you hit it right you can get caught up in these back channel areas all day. Today we dry fly fished throughout the trip as opposed to those unfortunates over on the Elk who had to nymph due to the precipitation.

We know that the fish are very active on the St. Mary when the sun is out and shining bright. That said, even on overcast days they still feed and if you know where they like to hang out you can still bring some of them to the surface. Fortunately, today was mostly sunny so the father and son duo caught around 35 fish between them. Dad is a beginner, but he still landed 9 fish on the day! The fish were nice and chunky - very healthy looking with the average being in the 13 to 15 inch slot and the biggest fish clocking in at 17 inches.

In terms of the hatch we saw a few blue winged olives pop off, but nothing else of note. Big grasshoppers were the most popular items on the menu today. We used the big foam bugs like hoppers and fat albert's - size 10-12. We also fished h&l variants, royal wulffs and caddis.

Signs of Seasons Changing:

We are now seeing the annual movement of deer into Kimberley as the bucks, young and old, have moved into City recently. The hunting season is coming soon and the deer are pretty safe in town!

That said, we expect the weather to stabilize shortly and take us into some great fall fishing!

Hope to see you on the river soon!

Kelly

(Report #15, 2008/08/15)

The Bull River is in the Zone!

Today we decided to take the journey up to the Bull River. August is the best month to float the Bull as the weather is the hottest and the cuts feed heavily up there this time of year. The Bull tends to have a pretty short season so we wish to take advantage of it when we can! The weather on the trip was very

nice topping out at 34° Celsius (93°F). The sky was pretty clear with only a few clouds floating above. It was a perfect day to head up into the backcountry.

The water conditions were also optimal. In the last few days the water dropped about a foot, but remains in the zone we like. The temperature of the water started out at 59°F popping up to 61 degrees by the end of the day (15 to 16°C). Great fishing conditions indeed.

We floated a lot today as one of the clients had a leg injury and could not walk much. So our approach was to park the boat in the best runs, or line the boat up so she could cast behind the rock and log structures, hitting the pockets amongst the fast river water.

On the day the fishing was very good, but it took awhile to get going as the morning was a bit slow. As the day progressed and the water temperature increased, the fishing became very good. Both anglers caught and released 12 to 15 cuts with the biggest fish coming in at around 16 inches. We found one particularly deep hole in the River that was loaded with fish and provided a lot of entertainment. It produced a bunch of very nice and chunky cuts.

The grey wulff was the strongest hatch on this trip down the Bull. While the cedar waxwings were diving all over the place munching up the wulffs, the birds seemed more interested than the fish! So on the day we used caddis, emerging caddis, royal trudes and yellow sally's in addition to royal wulff's - sizes 14 to 18. The big attractor patterns also worked pretty well, including fat albert's and tan grasshoppers - sizes 8 to 12.

The Bull River always provides a unique mix of beautiful scenery, clean air and great fishing and today was no exception.

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take care,



PS Call 1-800-667-2311 if you are interested in a guided trip. We are also booking the 2009 season now if you have a specific date you are interested in.

(Report #14, 2008/08/13)

St. Mary River Report: hot weather brings hot fishing!

We floated the St. Mary River today from the Pumphouse put-in down to the Wycliffe take-out. The weather was absolutely beautiful. The last few days in the Rockies have seen some erratic weather with a lot of wind, but today everything was calm and sunny, normal August weather for the Kimberley area. The daily high temperature reached 30° Celsius (86°F) and the fish seemed to love it! In the previous couple of days the changes in weather and barometric pressure seemed to mix up the fish and it was obvious they were not happy, but today things were fine!

The water is now holding very nicely. It is actually higher than normal for this time of year due to our long and cool spring, but still in the optimal fishing zone. We are seeing many well formed pools and great habitat complexity created by all those logjams and stacked up river debris. Most of the fish seem to have found their summer runs. The rest seem to be hanging out along the bank edges waiting for the hoppers to fall into the water where they are gobbled up with great gusto.

Our approach today was to do a bit of everything. We floated on and off depending on the stretch, hopped in and out to fish the bank edges, fished the back pools, as well as the braided sections from foot. Having the boat to work from allows us pretty well to do whatever we want! It also allows us to quickly move on from a normally productive section that has gone quite, helping us to avoid burning it out for the next anglers.

'Wonderful', describes how the St. Mary fished today. On the Pumphouse Run the two anglers pull out over 40 fish between them! The wild Westslope cuts were all sporting their bright tell-tale crimson slash on top of their brilliant yellow skin. It was also a big fish day today. We landed and released 5 cutthroats in the 16 to 17 inch class. One fish was a nice 18 inch 'cutbow' which was quite exciting to see as it put on an impressive aerial display prior to its landing! The St. Mary has many great fish in the system, fish of all sizes from 10 to 12's up to nice 15 to 17's with lots in each range.

In terms of hatches: hoppers are now on the water, in addition to a few caddis and small duns coming off. That all said, the hoppers are really dominating and we responded accordingly. We used parachute hoppers, the tan rubber hoppers and the white belly hoppers - sizes 8 to 12's. We also used some caddis, tan and orange, hi-vise parachute adams, some small duns and H&L variants, sizes 14 to 18.

Down River:

We have recently spotted the mother moose and her baby between Marysville and Kimberley eating in the high grass areas. So keep an eye open for them when you drive through.

Take care, see you on the river soon!

Kelly

PS The summer is flying by, but great September fishing is closer than you think so give us a call for available days. You can also find out why the guides and store owners do so much of their best fishing in September!

((Report #13, 2008/08/6))

Elk River Report: still, stable, clear, and very productive!

Today we floated the lower section of the Elk River and pulled out near Elko at the bridge. The weather was beautiful, not a cloud in the sky while the temperature pushed 30° Celsius (86°F). It feels like the hot weather is now here for the duration of the summer. We enjoyed the added bonus of no wind on the bottom end of the Elk. Those who have floated the Elk before know what a bonus this can be!

The Elk River is in prime condition as it is holding its water level very nicely and is crystal clear as you can see straight to the cobbles. That said, it is still pretty difficult to see the cutthroats lurking in all that cover. However, they will become visible very quickly if they like your bug of choice!

We had the privilege of dry fly fishing all day. There are not that many rivers in North America where you can put on a dry fly in the morning and fish it all day. That is what most people like to do on the Elk where they cast then anticipate the fish coming to the surface and taking the fly.

Today the Elk fished very well. The cutthroat trout sure love the sun and become very active when it is out in full throttle. On the day we saw many, many fish. Of the 50 or so we saw, the lone angler landed close 40! Although he may not admit it, I believe he was tired of casting by the end of the day. The biggest fish caught was around 18 inches - nice and chunky - with a big set of 'shoulders'. These

cutthroats are very healthy and they have a nicely defined red slash beneath their gills. The little guys in the 10 to 13 inch range always try to drown the fly before they eat it. The big fish, on the other hand, like to come up and just slurp the bug very slowly so be sure not to pull away too quickly!

During the float we saw a Baetis hatch and a Blue Winged Olive hatch. However, the fish were not keying on either of them. They seemed to like the bigger food on the water! So we used mostly ant patterns on the Elk - from small black ants to hi-vis ants, beetles and of course the Chernobyl Ant a.k.a. 'cutthroat candy'. We also tried a few traditional flies including the Royal Wulff's, Caddis and Yellow Sally's – mostly sizes 12 to 16 but did use some 18's as well.

River Talk:

So far this season we have had no threats of wildfires or smoke. The waters on the rivers are holding nicely and the cuts are feeding as much as they can. We anticipate that fishing in the fall should be fabulous so give some thought to coming in September if you are not booked in before then.

Take care,



St.Mary Angler, 1-800-667-2311

(Report #12, 2008/07/31)

The Bull River is 'Sweet' as it Rounds into Summer form!

Today we took off past Fort Steele on the way up and behind the Rockies to the land of the majestic Bull River. The morning skies were blue with no signs of clouds or any hint of a storm on the horizon. Given the Bull is a classic high mountain stream and susceptible to clouding up in the event of a summer storm, we save blue sky days like these for the trek into the back country. Summer temperatures have yet to reach their yearly highs in this part of British Columbia, so we had to settle for a very nice and warm 27 degrees Celsius (80°F) on this trip.

The water is at its optimal level now with a nice steady flow, lots of plunge pools and deep pockets formed up behind rocks and boulders. The Bull is beautiful at this time of year - so gorgeous with its emerald colour, setting and views. But remember to keep your eye on the fly as you do not want to miss that strike!

On this trip we mostly floated, casting to the hard to reach places and trying to drop the fly behind rocks and logs for a chance at one of those big cutthroat trout. We did manage to stop at a few places, getting out and hiking up and along the bank edges, casting along a log or into a nice looking pool. There is a little creek that flows into the Bull which marks the spot of some huckleberry bushes, so we had to stop and sample some! Sweet!

On the fishing front we had a great morning as we caught some really nice cutthroats in the 12 to 13 inch slot. Later on in the day we came upon a particularly productive "honey hole" where some of the cuts reached 16 to 17 inches, those are sizable fish for the Bull. Even with our 'blue sky cast-off' we did encounter a little storm rolling through after lunch which slowed the fishing down somewhat. But once it passed and the sun rolled out again the fish were back on the feed. By the end of the day the anglers had caught and released around 35 fish under the watchful eye of a couple of osprey in this

remote paradise.

There was not much of a hatch to speak of on this float. That said, if the caster managed a good drift, these hungry fish had no compunction to coming up and hammering it! In terms of artificials we used Bullet Head Hoppers, regular Parachute Hoppers, Chernobyl Ants (sizes 10 to 14), Royal Wulff's, Emerging Caddis, H&L Variants and Peacock Trudes (sizes 12 to 16).

September Calling: If you like fishing the Blue Winged Olive hatch then come up for a September float. September historically has some of our best weather and great fishing to go with it!

Hope to see you on the river soon,



St.Mary Angler, 1-800-667-2311

(Report #11, 2008/07/27)

The St. Mary is Flowing at its Optimum Level and Providing Optimum Fun!

We were back to the St. Mary River today to float the “S-bends” section which flows from the power line down through the rapids to the Golf Course take-out. The weather was beautiful with just a light breeze. We had a few stronger gusts later in the afternoon, but nothing to make the casting difficult. The temperature was a nice 25° C. (77 F.) with a few clouds bobbing around the sky.

The water is at its optimum level now, holding its level very nicely. We have had a couple rain showers in the past few evenings to cool things down. We surmise that the fish love this as it keeps the stream temperatures down and makes the fish more active. The temperature of the water on this day started at 15.5° C (60° F.) and went up a little to 18° (65° F.) by the end of the float.

Today we floated the River for a short time until we saw a nice looking log jam with a beautiful pool. We took the early opportunity to anchor and get out to fish. This spot looked appetizing because sometimes these holes can have either a lot of fish holding, or be dominated by a few big ones claiming the spot! This section of the St. Mary has a lot of habitat and is very pretty as it braids out all over the place. You get that remote, far into the wilderness feeling, in this part of the River.

The fishing on this stretch of the St. Mary today was excellent. Between the father and daughter tandem they caught and released 45 cutthroats! Wow what a day. The biggest fish caught was around 18 inches, taken from one of those pools formed by a logjam. Dad was so pleased with the work of his daughter and the guide was suitable impressed!

Some Caddis were hatching, but that was about the extent of it on the day. The most effective flies were traditional patterns including: regular Adams, Humpies (red and orange), Royal Wulff's and some of the ‘hi-vis’ stuff like the Parachute Adams and hi-vis beetles in the size 10-14 class.

Moose Crossing:

For your information there is a Moose hanging out and about on the road between Kimberley and Marysville. As you drive that route you may see this very big and beautiful specimen so be sure to watch your speed accordingly.

Hope to see you out there on the water soon.

Take care,

Kelly

St.Mary Angler,

Ps. Call 1-800-667-2311 for available days.

(Report #10, 2008/07/25)

The Bull River is a Bit Brawny, But Fishing Well!

In an effort to see how all our rivers are doing this summer, we were off to the Bull River today. We floated the section above the Aberfeldie Dam. The weather was beautiful - sunny and up to 30 degrees Celsius (86 ° F.). Given the remoteness and altitude of the Bull we always appreciate a hot day for this scenic float. The River is still a bit high, but very clear. The water temperature started off this morning at a brisk 9.5 degrees C. (49 ° F.), but warmed up to 15 (49° F.) by the end of the day.

The fishing was just great! We mostly floated, casting behind the big rocks in fast water, or working along the foam lines beside the logs, rocks or various combinations of both. The trees come right down to the water's edge in most areas of the Bull, limiting our ability to get out and fish, but we did manage to hop out a couple times to cast some nice runs. The Bull River runs faster than the St. Mary and the Elk, so it has a completely different feel to it.

As soon as we put the fly on the water it was like someone turned on the 'nature switch' and the fish were activated. Each angler caught and released around 20 cutthroats on the day. Most of the catch was in the 13-15 inch range. The biggest fish caught was about 16 inches. It was nice and chunky and hammered the dry fly pretty good! All of the Bull's fish looked very healthy and strong.

The hatches on the Bull included some Caddis and Yellow Sally's coming off, but not in great numbers. H and L Variants worked well, as well as Caddis, Lime Trudes and Royal Wulff's in the size 12-16 slot. We also used a few ant patterns the guides tied up before the trip to outwit some of the hungry cuts.

The views on this trip, with the Bull River against the backdrop of the Steeple section of the Rockies, is spectacular. We had a great day of fishing, scenery and fun.

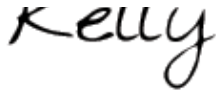
Fire Update:

Recently there was a wild fire near Fort Steele and the mouth of the St. Mary River. It was quickly contained and is now completely out. The other fires in B.C. are further north of us so we are in good shape.

Hope to see you out there on the water soon.

Take care,

12 11



St.Mary Angler, 1-800-667-2311

(Report #9, 2008/07/21)

The St.Mary River is Rounding into Summer Form

The 'Canyon Stretch' of the St. Mary River was our float today. The hot weather is now upon us as the temperatures have pushed into the 30's Celsius (mid 80's F.), so summer is now here. Today it was sunny with only a few clouds to dot the sky. There was a little breeze welcomed in the afternoon, just enough to cool us off.

The water on the St. Mary is now at its normal summer level and clear right to the cobbles. This year the weather has given us a lot hot days followed by cool evenings, which allows the water temps to cool down after the warm days.

Today we dry fly fished all day and it was spectacular. The fish were high up in the water column feeding on dries. We floated quite a bit, but also stopped to sample the nicest looking runs. When the water is in its normal summer range like now, we basically use the boats as transportation, moving down the River to find and hunt all the good holes and runs where the fish gather. That is the advantage of floating a river like the St. Mary where access is limited.

The two anglers on this trip had a great day as they caught and released about 25 fish each! While they saw a few cut-bows, the cutthroats were definitely the abundant fish out there. The cuts were all very healthy and hitting the fly with a lot of vigour. The average size was in the 12 to 13 inch range, with the biggest around 17 inches. This was definitely one of those days where we did a lot more catching than hunting!

In terms of hatches, the caddis flies are still hatching in good numbers, but the stone fly hatch has slowed right down and is almost done. The grasshoppers are showing up in good numbers in the adjacent fields right now so they are about to come on stream as well. As per the last couple of times out the attractor patterns we used worked well. For the traditionalists out there we also had success with Royal Wulffs, Irresistibles, Royal and Lime Trudes, emerging caddis, as well as regular caddis and Humpies - red or yellow. This assortment of flies sized 12 through 18 all worked quite well.

Things are really great out there on the water right now, and we hope to see you on the river soon.



St.Mary Angler, 1-800-667-2311

Ps. It is not too early to think about booking a fall trip as September is a wonderful month for the Blue Winged Olive hatches on the St.Mary. Fishing small flies amidst the grandeur of fall is a lot of fun too!

(Report #8, 2008/07/15)

The Elk River is Clear, Dropping and Producing Well.

The bottom stretch of the Elk River – from below the town of Fernie towards Elko - was our fishing destination today. As for the past week, the weather was again absolutely beautiful. The temperature reached 84 F. (29 C.) with just a few clouds and only a small amount of wind. The day started with the lone angler settling into ‘the best seat in the house’ at the front of the boat, anticipating a day of taking his best shot at what the fish in Elk had to offer.

The Elk is still a bit high, but has about 3 feet of visibility now. With every warm day the River is dropping steadily. As soon as we put in we could see the pools are forming and the runs are shaping up nicely. We could quickly see the fish at the top of the runs and as the water drops the fish will find their summer lies where they will stay throughout the season.

We mainly floated today casting our dries all day. It was easy to control the boat with only one angler as the guide could stop in the faster water, catch a back eddy and allow him to fish a certain bank edge or difficult spot. These are types of ‘sweet spots’ that anglers have a difficult time reaching from shore. In addition to the mainstem fishing from the boat, we stopped and walked a few back channels. Our approach was to cast to fish we saw rising, or just work the nice foam lines, trying to get the best drift possible through the area.

So how did it fish? The angler had a very productive day catching and releasing over 20 cutthroats with an average size of 14 to 15 inches. He also caught a few nice 17 inch cutthroats. Right now the Elk has a lot of feed on the water which explains why the fish are so chunky and vibrant.

In terms of the hatch, we identified caddis, yellow sallies, some stone flies and small may flies coming on stream. We used a few different traditional patterns – ants, Royal Wulffs, Irresistible's, Adams, caddis and Royal Trudes sizes 12 to 16. We also tried some foam attractor patterns. After lunch the angler pulled out one of his personal ant patterns which started to work very well so we left it on till the end of the day. This trip on the Elk was another successful day for an angler, as well as for the guide who enjoyed the lighter load!

As we hit mid July both the Elk and the St. Mary are fishing very well so we hope to see you on the water soon.



St.Mary Angler

PS Call 1-800-667-2311 for available days.

(Report #7, 2008/07/13)

The Fish have Settled into the Summer Feeding Stations on the St. Mary River.

We floated the ‘Mission to Fort Steele’ section of the St.Mary River today. This is the last leg of the St.Mary as it joins the Kootenay River near Fort Steele. We started a little later in the morning, around 10:30, to allow the water temperatures to warm up a bit. The temperature of the water upon put-in was a cool 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 C.), but upon take-out further down the system it had warmed to 60 F. (16 C.).

The weather was beautiful for our trip with clear skies and temperatures reaching a toasty 82 F. (28 C). There were only a few clouds drifting high over head, giving us another beautiful day as we floated

towards the Rockies.

The St. Mary is rounding into great shape as the pools are forming nicely and the new runs are looking very enticing. It is also getting easier for anglers to walk along the edges as the gravel bars are starting to appear more prominently. The River is clear. We still have a bit of snow on the Rockies and Purcell mountain ranges, but nothing which will adversely affect the colour or depth of the River anymore.

We fished mostly from the boat, but did evacuate to the gravel bars on occasion to fish the runs or land a few fish we had hooked up. Remember to make sure you have your wading boots on before leaving the boat because the rocks are very slippery right now. We also walked up some of the back channels where the water was looking very good. It appears the fish have broken up and settled into most of their summer lies as they were in the parts of the runs we normally expect to see them!

The St.Mary fished fabulously today. As soon as we threw a fly out into a nice foam line on the River, 'bam' the fish were on it. The angler caught and released around 20 fish and rolled and saw quite a few more. On one occasion when he was bringing in a cutthroat, we could see a big Bull Trout in close pursuit. He had to pick up the pace on the reel in order to avoid feeding that cutthroat to one big 30 inch Bull Trout! It was really cool to watch the Bull come very close to the surface before breaking off the pursuit and heading back into the depths of his pool.

In terms of the size of the fish, we caught a nice 17 inch Cut-Bow and many 12 to 15 inch cutthroats. The colours of the chunky cuts were vibrant, with the slash under the mouth particularly pronounced.

The stone flies have moved their way further up the River so we saw very few hatching on the bottom end today. However, there were lots of caddis flies hatching and we are starting to see a few grasshoppers out in the fields, so it should be a good year for hoppers as we move forward.

We mostly fished dries all day. The fish are now hungry and they are not necessarily following a hatch on the St. Mary. If it looks palatable and the drift is relatively good they will come up and hammer your bug. Basically you will hear the guide instructing you to, 'cast over there a little further' ... 'now mend' ... 'mend' ... 'mend, lift' ... 'keep tension on that fish', and then finally... 'Nice Fish!'

The flies that were working today included Tom Thumbs, Royal Wulffs, Parachute Adams, Lime Trudes, Hi-Vis Adams and caddis in the size 12 to 16 range. In terms of attractor patterns, we used with success foam ants, Fat Alberts and big stone patterns sized 8 to 12.

We saw an osprey flying over head back to her nest after diving for some fish on the River – our only real competition on the day. We also saw a bald eagle at her nest with her growing chicks - heads bobbing for food as she flied back and forth with dinner. So we had an all round awesome day on the St.Mary.

The Elk Report:

We are fishing the Elk River today so we will have a report for you shortly.

Hope to see you on the river soon,



St.Mary Angler

P.s. Call 1-800-667-2311 for available days.

((Report #6, 2008/07/06))**The Fish are Schooling in the St. Mary River.**

Today our fishing venue was the stretch of the St. Mary River from the Pumphouse at the Kimberley Golf Course down to the Wycliffe take-out. The weather included everything from sun and clouds to a few 'sun showers' mixed in. The temperature hit a high of around 23 degrees Celsius or 73° Fahrenheit, a very pleasant day for an early July float.

The St. Mary is still running high, but dropping daily. As the guides can be heard to say, "The River is a bit pushy.", as it sometimes makes it tough for them to stop in a run. But overall the water looks great with around 3 to 4 feet of visibility. It will continue to clear and drop every day with the nice weather we are having.

In terms of our approach, we dry fly fished all day. We fished on the move from the boat, as well as stopping and casting from the boat, in addition to hopping out and fishing from and along the shore edge. The River right now has a lot of back channels and places where it is forming great pools and pockets. Most of this section of the Mary looks great, with lots of logical spots for the fish to lie in wait of free floating food.

On this outing we found out that the fish are definitely in the system, but they are not in their normal summer lies yet. Right now they seem to be gathering in pods in certain holes and pockets of big water. When we found these sweet spots the fish were on like crazy, then we would float for a while without seeing a fish till we came across another well stocked section or hole. It was almost like we were hunting them under these conditions. And each angler had a successful 'hunt' as they caught around 10-15 fish. That said, we saw many cuts chasing the fly and just missing it as a result of either the strong current taking the fly away, or the angler lifting the rod a bit too soon thus taking their dinner right away from them! We did manage to hook four nice big cuts sized 16 to 17 inches - very thick and healthy with nice spotting and brilliant body colours.

Stoneflies, yellow sallies and caddis were coming off on the hatch today. We also saw some dark colour duns making an appearance as well. The flies that were most effective included the big attractor patterns such as Chernobyl Ants, stimulators (yellow and orange), Truk's Tarantulas (sizes 8 to 12), traditional patterns like lime trudes, caddis, Royal Wulffs, Irresistibles, and H&L Variants (sizes 12 to 16).

During the trip we saw a mother black bear and her two cubs close to where we put in. She saw us as well and hurried her little ones 20 feet up a tree - so cute, but we kept a safe distance nonetheless. While we were fishing on a nice braided section of the St. Mary a big Elk walked across the River just above us. What a great day to fish and commune with nature.

Cast and Blast

This fall we will be participating in the "Cast and Blast" Program, which includes hunting for pheasants and fly fishing for wild westslope cutthroats. If you are interested in booking this package for September and October 2008 call Three Bars Pheasant Ranch at 1-877-426-5230 or e-mail info@pheasanthunt.ca for more information.

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

Kelly

St. Mary Angler

(Report #5, 2008/06/25)

The St. Mary River is now ready for your floating pleasure.

Today the guides took the last test run on the St. Mary and pronounced it ready to guide! They caught many good sized fish, all on dry flies. The water is still a bit high, but it is clear and the back channels are fishing very well!

So get ready, another season of fishing is here!

Kelly

1-800-667-2311

(Report #4, 2008/06/22)

The top of the St. Mary River is close to being ready to guide.

Today we decided to finish off our spring reconnaissance of the St. Mary River by floating the top ¼ section of the River from St. Mary Lake down to the Power Line take out. The weather was quite nice with a few clouds in the sky. There was a slight threat of rain, but it really never materialized. Wind came up a bit during the float, but nothing the anglers could not handle.

The water conditions were ‘high, but clear’ as we had 3 feet of visibility on this stretch. The River recently came up about a foot and a half due to a hard overnight rain. Fortunately our Lake on the top of the system kept things clear. In the next few days we are expecting some hot weather so the River will come down again.

We never got on the water till just before 11:00 a.m. so by that time the upper River was fully bathed in sunshine and ready for some dry fly action. As this trip was another ‘test float’ we did not stop long in each of the sections we fished. We did hook a nice cutbow that was chunky and full of wonderful colours in the 15 inch range. It slammed the fly and took off jumping. What a great natural way to get pumped up! In addition, we caught and released an additional half dozen fish. We watched a lot of fish chase the fly, but the high water was hampering our ability to get a good long float for the fish to grab.

With regards to the hatch, we noticed a number of stone flies coming off, as well as some black ants, but nothing really significant. The flies that work well this time of year are caddis sized 12-14, stimulators orange and brown sized 10, 12 and 14, Chernobyl ants sizes 8 to 12, and lime trudes sized 12 and 14.

We are out on a float today so I will be able to let you know if the St. Mary is guidable this weekend coming up. By the way, Happy 4th of July!

See you on the river soon,

Kelly

(Report #3, 2008/06/15)

Testing, testing...the St.Mary River is ready to fish!

Today was a beautiful day for our first float of the year. It was very calm with only a few clouds in the sky. We put in at the Pumphouse and floated all the way down to Fort Steele where the St.Mary meets the Kootenay River. This is three of the four sections of the St.Mary. We put in at 11:00 a.m. and pulled off around 6:30 p.m. The St.Mary was cruising along pretty good, so we decided to check out pretty well the whole system to see what has changed since last summer.

The River flows were high this spring, but not high enough to cause any flooding of note. On this day the St.Mary had 3 to 4 feet of visibility and is clearing up steadily as it drops. There is still some snow in the high mountains, but the freshet is pretty well done.

We floated the River most of the day, getting out a few times to fish the back channels. The water is still moving quickly, but the fish are eager to feed and every once in a while the cuts were desperate enough to eat the fly! If we could get a good drift and get the fly to sit for a short while on the water, then success was ours. We are still waiting for all the fish to come back from their spawning beds up the tributaries. Once this happens they will jockey for the best feeding lies in the mainstem and we will be into another season of fishing.

The average size caught today was around 14 to 15 inches and all the anglers caught and released a few fish. Given we were really out to check the feel of the River over most of its length, we did pretty well and were happy with what we saw.

We did get a bit of a nice surprise when we caught a Bull Trout on the surface that pushed 20 inches. It slammed the dry fly with a big splash and the angler was shocked into lifting the rod and setting the hook. It was very healthy and a good first day bonus.

In terms of hatches we noticed the stone flies were starting to hatch on the lower part of the River and they will now slowly work their way upstream. In terms of flies, we tossed an assortment of dries including the big attractors, stone patterns, stimulators, lime trudes and caddis patterns.

With a few more hot days we expect the River to be fishing extremely well soon. As the level drops, the clarity will improve and the fish will start to congregate in the main stem and we will be off to another great season!

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Kelly

PS On the drift today we saw five eagle nests with at least 3 of them with baby birds bobbing their heads out the top of the huge structures. They are so cute! Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a trip or find out what days are still available to float with us.

((Report #2, 2008/06/08))**Premier Lake is in Premier Shape!**

Today's destination was Premier Lake. We have experienced a number of rainstorms in the last couple of weeks, but on this trip things were reasonably settled. So today was sunny, cloudy and calm and we dressed in layers. This time of year when the sun shines we rush to strip off a layer or two, but when it skirts behind a cloud, we scurry to layer up again!

This spring the weather has helped to prolong the good quality lake fishing. The cooler temperatures have kept the fish up in the water column and encouraged active feeding. The hatches have remained frequent and the fish are feeding heavily when they occur.

The runoff this year has been slow and consistent and the current level of the Lake is optimum for us. In addition, the Lake is now very clear. We used our pontoon boats today to access the drop-off ledges, troll the deeps and explore the shallows in search of trout.

This day on Premier Lake produced some fabulous fishing. We choose to chironomid fish as the hatches were coming off the Lake and we were quite eager to try it once more. We caught and released around 30 very healthy fish with the average size between 15 and 16 inches. We travelled around the Lake fishing many of the drop-off ledges. A few times we switched over and fished the wet line technique by pulling leeches down deep along the ledges. We would park the boat and cast the wet line out quite a distant and then retrieve it. A number of times we noticed the fish 'nose' the fly, so we would stop the retrieve for a few seconds, then quickly strip the line back in, then pause again... "wham!". This approach was very successful at enticing the trout to hammer the fly on the pause. It is their instinct to chase the leech and eat it all in one big gulp, and that is to an anglers' benefit. So we had some success on the leech pattern, but also tried a few Mayflies (using the chironomid technique) and caught a couple that way as well.

The biggest fish we caught of the day was a 17 inch 'silver rocket'. These Premier fish love to jump and make runs and this beauty produced a lot of excitement. In terms of the hatch, a few caddis flies joined the strong chironomid display on the day. The chironomids are defiantly what the fish are keying on as their stomachs were full of them.

On the way to the lake we saw a moose. At the lake we viewed a pair of ospreys and a bald eagle. The ospreys were in the process of building their nest, which held our attention for a few minutes. Of course when the hatches started up the swallows appeared by the hundreds to dive bomb the water in quest of a treat and the loons were seen cruising the shallows - our only real competition on the day!

River Watch:

The rivers in our region are open to fishing on June 15th and the St. Mary River is already looking quite fishable. The spring has been cool causing the runoff to slowly build a month ago and the snow to slowly disappear. So there is no big St.Mary freshet this year. While the St.Mary snow pack was in the 100% normal range, the headwaters of the Elk saw about 200%. Currently the Elk River is quite high and dirty as the big snow pack on Rockies is pouring off the mountains and into the valleys.

Hope to see you on the water soon!

Kelly

PS Call 1-800-667-2311 to find out about available days, or to book a trip.

(Report #1, 2008/05/19)

Lake fishing is great after starting late!

Well it is that time of year again when we head off to our favourite alpine lakes. The lakes in B.C's "Region 4" have been opened since May 1st, but the cool spring weather has kept the ice in place longer than usual and us away until recently. We are about 1 to 2 weeks behind what we usually call 'normal' for this time of year. While we are a bit late, the cooler temperatures have really helped the fishing as it has been spectacular! Premier Lake was one of the first lakes to ice off and it has been the most consistent all spring.

On this Victoria Day we were destined for Premier Lake amidst some beautiful weather. The mercury pushed 30 degrees Celsius (86 F.) with an accompaniment of clear skies and calm waters. The water clarity at Premier is 'gin clear' as the lake turned over last week. The added bonus on the day was the lack of any wind to hamper our chironomid casting.

We fished from a 14 foot boat as we travelled between the seven different dropoff ledges on the Lake. We always like to try different areas to see where the fish are cruising and feeding in the similar, but different habitats. The chironomid technique we use dictates that we find a good dropoff ledge, then anchor the bow and stern so there is no movement at all. Making sure our backs are to the wind, we then run a dry line with 12 to 20 feet of leader/tippet attached with a strike indicator and a weight. After we make our cast toward the dropoff ledge, we let it sink down for a few minutes then slowly retrieve the line. This approach allows the chironomid to imitate an ascending midge pupa as it travels up through the water column. This technique does a good job of mimicking reality and can drive the rainbows crazy!

"Fantastic" is the only word necessary to describe this day on the water. The anglers caught and released more than 50 fish! The rainbows averaged 14-16 inches and were healthy, chunky and frisky. The biggest fish caught was 18 inches and so full of chironomids that some were still hanging from its mouth... no need to pump his stomach to find out what was on the menu! We also caught a nice 16 inch brook trout - heavy and deep – a wonderful fish.

In terms of the hatches - chironomids dominated and were coming off steadily. We also saw evidence of other nutritionals including; leeches, damsels and black ants. The most successful flies on the day were - you guessed it - chironomids of various sorts. This included; black and red (sized 12 and 14), leeches, halfbacks, fullbacks and damsels (sized 8 and 10). Given the other food sources on the water, nymphs such as Copper John's lightening bugs and pheasant tails (sized 12 and 14) were also successful.

During the float we saw a couple of eagles pass overhead and deer along the shore. On the drive out we saw a female moose between Marysville and Kimberley. So one the whole it was a full day of great fishing, beautiful weather and fabulous scenery.

Beyond Premier:

In terms of the other lakes in our area, folks coming into the shop have told us that Horseshoe, Lazy, Echo, Whitetail and Whiteswan, are all fishing very well. We strongly encourage you to get out on the water and check it out for yourself if you can!

The Rivers:

In terms of the rivers in our area, the spring freshet has begun and with a few days of recent hot weather, water is now pouring off the mountains. The Purcell Mountain Range, which feeds the St. Mary River, received just over 100% of its long term average snow pack this winter. The B.C. Rocky Mountains, which supports the flows of the Elk River, have a snow pack of over 200% of the long term average. So there should be some high water in low lying areas. What this means for you is that the sands, gravels and boulders of the rivers are being resorted so that come summer the rivers will be tuned up and ready for your fly fishing pleasure!

I hope to see you on the water this season,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop on the 'y'.

Kelly Laatsch, St. Mary Angler Fly Shop.

PS Call 1-800-667-2311 to find out about available days, or to book a trip.