

# ST.MARY ANGLER FLY SHOP

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[June](#)[July](#)[August](#)[Sept.](#)[October](#)[Fishing  
Report](#)

## St.Mary Angler: 2011 Season in Review

### Overview

Any analysis of the fishing season always starts with a cursory review of the amount of snowfall we received the previous winter. After all, as snowfall melts into water and flows downstream, it becomes the lifeblood of our rivers, streams and lakes. Last winter we experienced the effects of the La Niña cycle and the snow pack can only be described as “huge”. According to the June 1 “Snow Survey and Water Supply Bulletin” issued by government, the snow pack in Kootenay Watershed was a whopping 407% of normal and over in the Columbia it was 136%. Now that is a lot of frozen water!

Typically the snow starts to melt in the middle of April in our part of the world. However this year, the cool April and May led to a delay in the onset of snow melt by 3 to 4 weeks. This led to a more prolonged freshet throughout our region and not nearly the level of flooding one would think we should have from such a huge snowpack. So we had a lot of water, but thankfully it took a long time to work its way into our streams and rivers.

Rainfall during the 2011 fishing season was a little above the long term average in May and June, and below from July to September. The daily temperatures were a little below the long term normal from May to July, and quite a bit above in August and September. So we experienced a cooler spring and warmer summer than is usual for South-eastern British Columbia.

On the whole, conditions on our rivers were very good in terms of fishability, floatability and having lots of cool, oxygenated water for the fish to thrive in. While water levels were higher in the spring, fishing was very good early on. The higher than normal water conditions persisted throughout the 2011 season and did not adversely effect fishing later on in the summer. In fact, all that water improved the conditions for fish and the fishing.

We started the spring fishing season guiding for the big rainbows on the Columbia River south of Castlegar B.C. in early April. We started the summer fishing season on the St.Mary and Elk rivers in late June. The season lasted into early October on the St.Mary and Elk rivers in the East Kootenays and until the end of October over on the Columbia River in the West Kootenays. So once again we were blessed with ample precipitation and good warm weather to undertake another passionate season of fly fishing in South-eastern British Columbia.

**Rainfall** (Millimetres at Station ‘Cranbrook A’):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Rainfall in 2011	45.8	56.4	28.6	28.8	14.6
Rainfall in 2010	36.6	78.8	30.8	45.8	42.4
Average Monthly Rainfall (long term)	42.6 mm	52.7	38.2 mm	31.6 mm	27.3 mm

### Temperature (Celsius at Station ‘Cranbrook A’):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Temperature in 2011	16.5 °C (61.7 °F)	20 °C (68 °F)	25.2 °C (77.4 °F)	27.9 °C (82.2 °F)	23.4 °C (74.1 °F)
Temperature in 2010	15.5 °C	20.6 °C	26 °C	24.5 °C	17.4 °C
Average Daily Max. Temperature (long term)	17.7 °C (63.9 °F)	21.6 °C (70.9 °F)	25.6 °C (78.1 °F)	25.4 °C (77.7 °F)	19.6 °C (67.3 °F)

### Spring time on the Columbia River in the West Kootenays

We started the 2011 season guiding clients for the big rainbow trout over on the Columbia River in the West Kootenay region of B.C. This is the 35 mile portion of the Mighty Columbia that stretches from the Canada-U.S. Border up to the city of Castlegar, B.C. We fly fish this stretch of big water from our 16 foot jet boat which we have customized to allow us to row as well. The jet allows us to move anglers quickly upriver and the customization allows us to float down and through the big eddies, rowing as needed to keep the angler in optimal fishing water.

This section of the Columbia is marked by long runs and big back eddies and can run in depth from a few feet to over two hundred. The River bottom is made up by an assortment of gravel and cobbles to huge boulders.

The Columbia River provided lots of excellent fishing days from early April to mid June. The weather conditions this spring were a little cooler than normal. The river flows started out at around 50,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) in early April. Flows topped out at over 135,000 CFS by the time we headed back to the East Kootenays to fish the St.Mary and Elk rivers in the late June.

The Columbia River produced very well this spring. We were fishing in typical fashion outfitting all three types of rod setups (streamer, nymph and dry) and using the one that best fit the conditions of the day.

The Columbia River is best described as an unpredictable fishery in terms of catch rates. That said, with good casting skills an angler can land 5-10 per day, but some days it can be many more. The nice thing is that the average size rainbow caught is as big as you will find in any trout stream in North America.

The bulk of the rainbows we caught in the spring were in the in the 18-22 inch slot with the odd big fish

of 23+ thrown in. With the combination of big river conditions, and strong healthy fish, anglers were often into their backing once they managed to hook-up and the fight was on. The anglers were landing the bulk of the rainbows using our custom streamer patterns. However, we did get to land some of these rainbows on dries when the hatches dictated and they were feeding on the surface like pods of dolphins. The Columbia is a unique river fishing experience where everything is big – the hatches, the water and the fish!

## **Summer on the St.Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck Rivers of the East Kootenays**

The big snow pack in combination with the cool spring meant we did not start guiding trips on the St.Mary and Elk until around July 15th. This was about 3 weeks behind when we normally hit the water. We did not see any great changes to river morphology even though we had a lot of runoff. It must have been because it came over a longer period of time – thankfully for those concerned about flooding.

Right of way we were seeing good stonefly hatches on the Elk and Green Drake hatches on the St.Mary. It was also apparent early that the Wild Westslope Cutthroats had wintered well as they looked bright and strong.

By Late July the conditions were rounding into form. The big Green Drake hatches on the St.Mary were providing some real excitement. On one trip out the cutthroat were aggressively feeding on Drakes on the surface. We knew if we could “match the hatch” and float the fly in front of the cutthroat's nose with no drag, we were in business. The Green Drake hatch lasted two hours and each angler landed about 10 fish in a single pocket of the St.Mary. On that day both anglers caught about 20 cuts each with the fish running on average about 14 inches and the biggest a beauty of 18. By early August we were floating the Bull and Skookumchuck rivers, in addition to the St.Mary and Elk.

By mid August all the rivers were in their summer groove with optimal flows and structure, accompanied by excellent water clarity. The weather was warmer than normal as the daily highs were about 4.5°F warmer than the long term average – so we had lots of hot days with clear skies. The anglers were catching cutthroats in the 13 – 15 inch average slot with some nice big cuts over 18 inches turning up on both the St.Mary and Elk Rivers. Catch rates were good with anglers landing 10-30 fish per day depending on their abilities, and the grasshoppers were everywhere.

The rivers continued to fish well in September. We had lots of water in the rivers which provided optimal conditions and a daily maximum temperature that was 6.8°F warmer than the long term average – so the weather remained very nice. We were finding the fish were very active throughout the day right into early evening which provided a lot of opportunity to anglers. The average size cut landed was around 14 inches and they were healthy and chunky. Again the catch rates were good and fish over 18 were showing up. We were seeing hatches of Pale Morning Dunns, Mayflies, October Caddis and Blue Winged Olives to go along with all the grasshoppers lining the banks. The conditions on the St.Mary, Elk and Bull rivers in the fall were really fantastic this year.

## **Fall fishing for big rainbows on the Columbia River**

After things wrapped up on the St.Mary, Elk and Bull Rivers in later September, we went back over to the stretch of the Columbia River just above the Canada/U.S. border to chase the big fall rainbows. The weather held up nicely and was near perfect for fall fly fishing. The temperature was a comfortable 20°C (68°F) with clear skies and lots of sunshine in the first part of October. The water conditions on the Columbia River were still a little high for this time of year, as was the case all season. The water clarity remained very good.

The average size of the rainbows being landed in the fall was 18-22 inches with bigger trout over 24 inches being landed on occasion. In addition to the all the rainbows landed, we were excited when a nice

19 inch brown trout was landed and released on one trip. On the last trip of the season a robust 25 inch rainbow was landed after quite a fight. We ran our last float on the Columbia in mid-October and simultaneously wrapped up the 2011 season.

So there you go, another year of fishing with the St.Mary Angler in the books. 2011 provided us with a lot of great fishing in a variety of locations in South-eastern British Columbia. It was great to start the year over on the stretch of the Columbia River downstream of Castlegar, B.C. as the upstream dam pretty well guarantees good spring flows for fishing. Once summer came, we were back floating the St.Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck rivers in pursuit of the hungry Wild Westslope Cutthroats. After fall slowed things on the St.Mary and Elk, we finished off the year chasing the big rainbows back on the Columbia.

We were fortunate to have good weather during the season, after a slow start, and had no forest fires or significant other natural hazard to hamper our access to the fish. We had a wonderful year of fishing and greatly enjoyed and appreciated your patronage. We hope to see you next year and will be attending tradeshows in the New Year.

We would like to wish you a healthy and safe winter. Don't hesitate to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the rivers you wish to fish, next year's available days, or to book a float trip in 2012.

Take care,

*Kelly & Karen*

Kelly and Karen Laatsch, St.Mary Angler

PS To find out which tradeshows we will be attending go [click](#) for dates, locations and contact us for will call tickets if you will be attending.

## 2011 Fishing Reports

**(Report #21, 2011/10/03) Columbia River Report: the big rainbows are out there.**

Today we decided to fish the section of the Columbia River up near Robson, B.C. The weather was very pleasant with temperatures reaching 20°C (68°F) which is as good as it gets in terms of fall fishing comfort. The fall colors are absolutely beautiful now with the bright oranges and reds coloring up the side hills. There were a few high clouds floating above, but noting to interfere with our wonderful fall day on the River.

The water clarity on the Columbia remains excellent as it is clear to 15 feet below the surface. The River level is slightly above normal for late fall with flows at 148,000 cubic feet per second.

In terms of our approach to fishing today, we used dry line setups for the dries and threw streamers on wet lines against the bank edges. The rods were outfitted with proper leader and tippet in advance as to not waste time on the water. With the dry lines we prefer a 12 foot leader at the minimum; with full sink lines we outfit them with 8 foot leaders.

The Columbia produced some very nice fish today. The average sized rainbow was 18 inches and 10

fish were caught and released. In addition, the anglers managed to catch some really nice walleye on streamers in the large back eddies. In terms of the walleye they caught 7 with the largest being a real lunker at about 5 pounds.

The biggest trout caught today was a robust 25 inch rainbow which fought hard until the very end. The fisher managed to pulled it in close to the boat where we got a nice photo of this beauty before releasing it back into the wild.

Blue Winged Olives and small Caddis were coming off today, which was great as we were able to catch a few trout on dries! In terms of what flies were working, Kelly's Super Streamer was very effective, as well as Kelly's Mondo Prince. The anglers also used Blue Winged Olives and Caddis flies sized 14 to 18.

During the trip today we saw a black bear cruising along the bank edge of the River, and also enjoyed the sight of some bald eagles and plenty of water birds. It was a great fall day on the Columbia.

The Columbia River fishes great right up to the first freeze and then it slows down. So we are still out fishing and have some available days before things slow down. So give us a shout if you are looking for some quality rainbow fishing.

Take care,



## St.Mary Angler

PS We are now taking bookings for the 2012 season. This includes the Columbia in spring and fall and our East Kootenay streams throughout the summer.

### **(Report #20, 2011/09/26)**

#### **Columbia River Report: the fall conditions are excellent and rainbows are abundant.**

Our trip today took us over to the Mighty Columbia River in the West Kootenay Region, about three hours drive west of our base in Kimberley, B.C. The piece of the Columbia we are fishing stretches between the cities of Castlegar and Trail, B.C. We have put away the rafts for the season and pulled out the jet boat so we can cruise this section of big water in search of rainbow trout.

The weather was near perfect for fall fly fishing. The temperature reached 20°C (68°F) with a few clouds floating high in the sky. Many of the trees along the river corridor are starting to turn the wonderful orange and yellows of fall, just spectacular!!

The water conditions on the Columbia River are still a little high for this time of year, as has been the case all season. The clarity is excellent with a morning water temperature at a cool 52°F (11°C) .

When we fish the Columbia River we come prepared by rigging up three different rod setups. They include: a streamer line, a nvmp line and a drv line. The rods are all 4 piece. 10 foot. 6 weight rods –

perfectly suited for the conditions on the Columbia. Once the guide has situated the boat at the top of the eddy (shutting the motor off) he will then begin a controlled drift down the River allowing the fishers to throw streamers along the bank edges. This is a very effective way to attract fish out from their hiding places in the depths so they can feed on the food that travels by them.

The fishing was very good today, typical for September and October on the Columbia which always provides excellent fall action. On this outing the fishers caught and released 18 fish between them, but lost another ten plus as the big rainbows yanked themselves free from the hook just before the clients could get them to the boat. The average size of the fish caught was 18 to 19 inches with the biggest rainbow being a nice 23 incher. In addition to the all the rainbows landed, everyone on board was excited when we caught a nice 19 inch brown trout, which is a rarity in this river system.

In terms of the hatches, the only noticeable activity occurred in the afternoon when we observed small midges and mayflies coming off - sized 16 to 18. The effective flies that worked on the Columbia today included; Prince Nymphs, Kelly's Super Streamer, Woolly Buggers, as well as a few dry flies (Caddis). The streamers were sized 6 to 8 and the dry flies were sized 14 to 18.

The Columbia is fishing very well now, and traditionally fishes well through October. So if you do not want to put your fishing rod away and are on the hunt for some big rainbows, come on up and check us out!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 if you wish to discuss fall fishing conditions on the Columbia River.

**(Report #19, 2011/09/19)**

**Elk River Report: the fall conditions are fantastic!**

On this trip we headed out early towards Fernie B.C. to fish the Elk River. This is about an hour's drive from our base here in Kimberley. The mornings are now quite cool and crisp as the trees are starting to turn those beautiful orange and red colors of fall.

Even though the weather started off cold this morning at about 5°C (41°F), the temperature peaked at 17°C (63°F) in the afternoon. The warm temperature along with clear blue skies and brilliant sunshine really set off the fall colors of the trees throughout the river corridor. As well, most of the day saw very little wind which provided us with all round fantastic fall fishing conditions.

The water conditions are also prime with clarity to the bottom of the nicely formed pools and runs throughout the Elk River.

The game plan today was to launch the boat on the lower section of the Elk River and float down to the take-out at Elko. This section of River provides a little longer float which allows the anglers to fish from the boat a little more than other runs.

The dry fly fishing today was very good once the air temperature warmed up and the fish became active. The anglers approach included casting towards the bank edges and along fallen logs, or behind rocks as we drifted by. Once the fly is cast, and the line is mended to avoid any direct drag, the bug will float naturally down the seam. Lucky for us anglers, cutthroats cannot pass up a meal and if they are in the vicinity of the well presented fly, they will come up and feed. If you see a feeding fish you know you can catch him as long as your casting location and presentation are good.

The fishing was slow in the morning, started to pick up as the day warmed, and fished very well the rest of the day. The anglers caught and released 30 fish between the two of them with the average size of cut landed in the 14 inch class. The fish are very healthy and chunky now as they gorge themselves in anticipation of winter setting in.

One of the nicest cutthroats caught on the day occurred in the afternoon when one of the anglers casted into some structure around a couple of big boulders. This situation can be quite difficult to get that good presentation I mentioned above. However, he had observed a big cutthroat coming up and feed in the area, so the fisher put the fly above the feeding fish and let it float naturally over the area. The fish came up and aggressively took the fly and the fight was on. Once landed the cutthroat measured 19 inches and was the highlight of the day!

The hatches on this float included; October Caddis, as well as small Blue Winged Olives throughout the day. The flies that were effective were the Blue Winged Olive, Mahogany Dun, Orange or Yellow Stimulators, Adams, Grey Drakes - sized 12 to 16. Foam patterns sized 10 to 14 also worked well at times.

We had a little excitement today in terms of a wildlife encounter. After lunch we were walking along the edge of the Elk heading up to a good section of water to fish. We had our heads down as we walked over uneven ground and unbeknownst to us, a bear was coming directly towards us with his head down as well. In retrospect the wind was blowing towards us and away from the bear so he could not pick up our scent. At the same time both us and the bear looked up. I think everyone was startled, the bear and us, so with a wave of our arms and some shouting the bear ran off into the bush. The fishing hole did turn out to be very good so it was worth all the excitement!

### **Columbia River Bound:**

We will be guiding clients on the Columbia River this week so I will have a report shortly. The weather is holding and I heard the long term forecast looks good until mid October! So come on over and take the opportunity to enjoy our wonderful fall fishing on the Mighty Columbia for the big wild rainbows!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 if you wish to discuss available days and fall fishing conditions on the Columbia River.

**(Report #18, 2011/09/11)**

## **St.Mary River Report: Summer just keeps rolling along!**

Today we floated the St. Mary River from the Powerline put-in down to the Pumphouse take-out. It is a very beautiful segment of the St.Mary River with the added feeling of being quite remote.

The weather was very nice today with temperatures reaching a high of 30°C (86°F). It definitely still feels like summer today, even though the calendar reminds us that we should be expecting fall. Summer is hanging on with no signs of the trees turning color yet. The mornings are cool, but we are experiencing a lovely start to September.

The water on the St. Mary is at its normal depth for this time of year. The water temperature reading taken this morning was 58°F (14.4°C) and reached a high of 65°F in the afternoon. The conditions are perfect for dry fly fishing as the water is crystal clear and the fish can readily see the food floating down the seam line. They are feeding quite aggressively now as they must sense fall and winter are coming down the track as we do!

As with all the rivers in the East Kootenays, dry fly fishing is the choice for most avid fly-fisherman. The cutthroats in these systems are very opportunistic feeders and they prefer a dry-fly over a nymph. They are definitely different than browns or rainbows which tend to be more skittish and often are scared of their own shadow! So with this trait of the cutthroat in mind, today's group of anglers rigged their 4 or 5 weight rods with dry lines equipped with a 9 foot 5X leader with the guides choice of fly tied on. They casted along the bank edges and behind rocks to see if they could fool a cutthroat trout to come and eat their bug!

The fishing started off a little slow in the morning, with the anglers landing a few fish before lunch. After the riverside lunch break, the fishing action really started to heat up as the fish were easily drawn to the surface by a good drift. The quality of the drift of the fly is very important because if you get any drag or pull on the fly by the current, the fish will not even look at it.

The anglers caught and released 34 fish between the two of them. One of the fishers was just a beginner, but she did catch a few and got them to the boat which was a great thrill for her. The average size of fish caught was 13 to 14 inches and the biggest cutthroat was a nice 17 incher. The cutthroats are very healthy and chunky this season, one reason is likely the kokanee are coming up the system to spawn this time of year. The cuts take advantage of this by sitting below the kokanee and gorging themselves on the eggs as the females spawn. That said, they are still coming to the surface to feed on our dry flies, which is good for us anglers.

In terms of hatches today, there were some small midges coming off the River later in the day, while the grasshoppers were everywhere along the banks. Flies that worked well today included the stimulator, tan caddis, lime trudes, royal wulffs and adams (either with, or without the parachute) - sizes 14 to 18. We fished the bigger bugs in the afternoon, including a number of foam patterns - sizes 10 to 12.

During the float we were lucky to see a black bear swim across the St.Mary River just downstream from our boat. It looked like a two year old bear that had recently left its mother. Very cool!

Summer is hanging on and it is just beautiful in the Rockies at this time of year. Fishing has been great on all the rivers so come on up and check us out.

Take care,

*Kelly*

## St.Mary Angler

PS Soon we will be moving over to the West Kootenays to take a number of guided trips on the Columbia River in search of the big rainbows. So stay tuned for a fishing report in the next week, or give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 if you wish to discuss available days.

**(Report #17, 2011/09/05)**

### **Elk River Report: the late summer continues to produce very, very well.**

Today was the day to head over to the Elk River for some late summer dry fly fishing. The weather was absolutely beautiful with temperatures reaching 30°C (86°F) with the added bonus of no wind. An excellent combination for the Elk!

The water conditions and levels are normal for this time of year with pristine clear runs. The temperature of the water was 58°F (13.4°C) this morning as we got onto the River. Once in the boat, we rowed across the Elk and anchored up on the flat where the anglers started casting immediately. Using 5 weight rods with 5x tippet, the fishers casted their bugs with particular care to get a good drift on the fly. Right from the beginning the fish were eager to eat and thus the ground was laid for an outstanding day of dry fly fishing on the Elk.

The fishing action was good right from the start and only slowed down for about an hour around lunchtime as they stopped feeding aggressively. After our lunch the activity started up again (good timing for us) and the fish fed continuously right through to when we pulled off the Elk River at around 6:30 P.M. During the float the anglers fished from the boat; casting their lines towards the banks, close to logs and behind the big instream rocks. In addition, we also stopped and got out of the boat often on the big runs to allow the fishers to spread out and fish the banks.

The fishing was spectacular today with the average size cutthroat landed in the 14 inch slot. The two anglers caught and released 50 fish between them. The fish looked very healthy and pulled hard once on the line. The biggest fish released today was a nice 18 inch cutthroat, a beautiful chunky fish whose girth told us he has been eating very well.

The hatches coming off during our float included small midges, Pale Morning Dunn Mayflies and October Caddis. The Elk River can have many hatches come off during the day, and maybe this is why the cuts are so chunky. It also has the effect of supporting a number of osprey which were circling above during the float today. The flies used on this trip included Ant patterns, Caddis, PMDs, Stimulators and Renegades - sized 12 to 16.

### **Summer to Fall:**

Summer is still with us in the Kootenays and the weather looks great for the upcoming forecast. Late summer to fall is a beautiful time to fish with the fall colors emerging, the crisp cool air of the mornings and the great fall hatches on the rivers that make the fish feed so aggressively.

Hope to see you on the rivers of south-eastern B.C. this fall.

Take care,



**St Mary Angler**

## St. Mary Angler

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss upcoming fall fishing opportunities on the St. Mary and Elk Rivers, as well as over on the Columbia River.

### **(Report #16, 2011/08/28)**

#### **The St. Mary River provides some spectacular dry fly fishing.**

Today we floated the uppermost run of the St. Mary River from the outlet of St. Mary Lake down to the Pump-house. As the water drops later in the summer this can be quite a long float. But these conditions also allow anglers to get out onto the gravel bars to fish the runs in some really productive sections. Another interesting aspect of this section is some class water, but at this time of year the lower water makes it more of a boulder garden than anything else, but it is fun to ride.

The weather was very warm today with it topping out at 31°C (88°F) with very little wind. Blue skies and gorgeous weather have been the norm for the past few weeks.

The water is at its normal summer level and many pockets and runs are fishing very well. The water temperature is also normal as it starts off at around 55°F (13°C) in the morning then warms up as the day progresses. Sometimes the water temperature reaches into the 60's F (15.5° to 17.5°C) by the afternoon.

The St. Mary River has been fishing very well and it still feels like we are a month behind on the calendar due to the cool spring. It is already near the end of August and the fishing is just starting to reach its peak!

The dry fly fishing was spectacular today as the anglers casted their dry lines along the bank edges, behind the rocks, and up and against the fallen logs along the River. The fish sometimes would chase the flies on the surface, but as a rule these drift sensitive cutthroats demand a good mend of the fly to get a really good drift. Lighter equipment, such as 4 or 5 weight fly rods are great on this River, in addition to being preferred by many of the fishers who come here.

The fish were very active at the start of the day and continued up until around noon. The feeding then slowed down, it was almost like someone had turned the power off. But just like that, at 2.30 “the power came back on“ and they began feeding again and continued into the later afternoon.

The anglers caught and released around 40 cutthroats between the two of them. The average size was 13 to 14 inches and one fisher hooked into a nice 18 inch cutthroat. This fish pulled and fought hard until the angler was able to get the fish in the net and take a nice photo of it. Good memories of a wonderful day out on the water and casting to rising fish is what you dream of on a hot summer day!

The St. Mary River now has many grass-hoppers along the edges with some falling in and making the fish excited to feed. The flies that were effective on this trip included the White Belly Hopper, Parachute Hopper or Dave's Hopper, Fat Alberts, Red or Green Humpies, Tan Caddis, Royal Wulffs and Stimulator Chew Toy's, sizes 10-14.

On this trip we saw a number of eagles and ospreys in the St. Mary River valley. They are as interested in the fish as we are. When on the River keep your eyes peeled early in the morning for bears as this is when they like to come down to the River to drink.

#### **Fall Fishing Primer:**

September is just around the corner and the fish know summer is moving along, even if it did get a late start. They will be feeding like crazy before it gets cold, as we know the cuts are very opportunist and feed regularly! This is my favorite month to fish as there are more hatches on the rivers. If you like to fish with the Blue Winged Olives or Mahogany Duns coming off then come up and do some dry-fly fishing with us this fall.

Take Care,



St.Mary Angler

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss the fall hatches and fishing opportunities on the rivers of southeastern B.C.

**(Report #15, 2011/08/21)**

**The Elk River is in its summer groove.**

Today our destination was the Elk River where we floated one of the sections above the town of Fernie. The weather has been absolutely beautiful in the Kootenay region of south-eastern B.C. and today was no exception. The sky was clear blue with a temperature reaching 30°C (86°F). The drive over to Fernie from Kimberley takes about an hour with the mandatory stop in Jaffery for a coffee and strudel. They make the best strudel at the convenient store-gas station in Jaffery and it is a nice way to start a trip to the Elk.

Once we arrived at the Elk River we could readily see the water conditions are normal for this time of year; crystal clear runs with nicely formed pockets and pools. The type of conditions that make a fisher want to cast a line right away and hook into a cutthroat on a dry!

So we rigged up everyone's 4-5 weight rods with 4x tippet with the last foot or so having an added length of 5x or 6x tippet. Then we added the dry fly of choice and climbed into the boat to begin the float down the majestic Elk River.

Our approach was to cast along the bank edges, along any logs, or behind rocks in the pools, to see if we could tempt any fish to take the flies. During the recent full moon cycle the fish have been feeding heavily at night which has made the Elk River cutthroats more discerning throughout the day. In response we have had to fish later into the day as things did not really pick up till about 4:00 P.M. However, once the bite started the Elk fished great till later into the evening. But since the full moon cycle is now over, the fishing throughout today was very good! The average fish landed was 14 inches in length and the two anglers caught and released around 45 between them.

The largest fish caught on this float was a nice 18 inch cutthroat that made a good run, then came back to the boat for a good photo opportunity for the angler. A very pretty fish with the big red slash down its jaw and looking very healthy and strong.

The hatches coming off the Elk were mainly small midges. We also saw a burgeoning population of grasshoppers in the adjacent fields. On the float we used the following flies; black and tan caddis, Royal Wulffs, Parachute Adams, Royal Trudes and foam patterns including grasshoppers and Fat Albert's sizes 12-18.

The summer season is now in full force and the fishing is great. Give some thought to coming up for fall fishing as the weather is usually very good in September, the fall colors are gorgeous and the fishing pressure is very light.

Take Care,

Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS You can reach us directly at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss the summer or fall fishing opportunities.

**(Report #14, 2011/08/15)**

**St.Mary River Report: The Pump-house to Wycliffe run is in prime form.**

Today we floated the section of the St. Mary River from the Pump-house put-in down to the take-out at Wycliffe. This section of the St.Mary River is a particularly pretty float as the River braids in several spots and looks like a true freestone river. Another intriguing aspect to this section is that you can get out of the boat and walk the River banks to fish from shore in numerous locations. The gravel bars are nice and big now which make casting much easier from shore as there is nothing behind to interfere with your efforts. This is helpful to beginners and experts alike.

The weather has been very nice for a few weeks now. Clear blue skies with very little wind has become the norm with temperatures reaching the mid 20's C (high 70's F).

The water conditions are great with optimal levels, excellent clarity and pools all formed up nicely. The fish have moved into their summer holds and they are feeding heavily on whatever floats into their path.

Dry fly fishing is the way to fish the St. Mary now and it can be very productive. The cutthroats are not hatch orientated on the St.Mary. If you get a good drift on your fly, the cuts will come and give it a good look and either take it, or refuse it. If they refuse it, remove that fly immediately and put something smaller on. It is always good to change your flies if you are not touching them. When you are out on the River, don't be reluctant to change things up a bit.

Once you have chosen your fly, all you have to do is put a nice cast into the foam line and let it fly drift naturally. And that is what the anglers did on this day and the fishing turned out to be excellent. All different sizes of fish came to the flies and the average fish caught and released was 13 inches with a few 15 and 16 inchers landed.

The biggest fish caught on the day was a robust 18 inch cutthroat. The red slash was very bright and the fish looked very healthy. This guy put up a really good fight. Most anglers who fish this River report to us that the cutthroats on the St.Mary are very good fighters.

There were no noticeable hatches on the St.Mary today. We only saw a few small midges coming off, but nothing really notable. The flies that were most successful today were the Royal Wulffs, Parachute Adams, Tan Caddis, H&L Variants, Lime and Royal Trudes and of course, foam patterns, sizes 12-16.

There was a lot of wildlife sighted on the float today with some deer on the bank edges and eagles flying over head. One of our friends reminded me about the bear life in this area, yes there are bears out

there. So just a reminder when you are out and about that they are usually more scared of you, so just make a lot of noise if you are walking through the bush. Most of the time the bears come down to the River in the early mornings, or late at night for a drink. So you do not have to worry too much on the St. Mary, but remember that they are out there!

The fishing is really good right now as we are experiencing optimal summer conditions. I am also happy to report that there are no forest fires in our region of B.C. So come on up and enjoy the summer fishing season here in the Kootenays.

Take care,



St.Mary Angler

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss available days for the rest of the summer and fall.

**(Report #13, 2011/08/3)**

**The Skookumchuck River is in prime form for dry fly fishing.**

Today was a perfect day to go and dry fly fish the Skookumchuck River. The conditions made for an enjoyable hour long walk from the parking spot back into the remote canyon where we waded this stream in search of wild West-slope Cutthroat. The scenery in and about this River is really quite something. It is very majestic and magical out there and makes the walk well worth the effort.

The weather was absolutely gorgeous today with the high reaching 30°C (86°F) with a clear sky and no wind to speak of. On hiking trips like this one to the Skook, the anglers carry their rods and water ration and the guide carries the lunches. As breaking a rod in the tall grass or brush is a real possibility, we don't string them until we are ready to commence fishing. Once at the River, everyone rigged up their fly rods (five weights with dry lines and the Guide's choice of a fly) and gazed upon the first run to see if there was any feeding fish. And we were off.

Because the water has been very high this spring and early summer, the River level remains elevated for this time of year. This higher than usual flow did restrict our ability to cross the River at some of the usual crossing areas. However, the water clarity was very good. That being said, the fish seemed to like the high water and were found pretty much everywhere throughout the runs. When conditions look this good, it feels like the only thing that can limit one's ability to lure a fish to the surface, is one's fishing technique and the choice of fly.

The anglers casted their dry flies out into the pools and pockets and fished through the runs effectively, bringing fish to the surface and landing them. On the Skookumchuck River you must know how to roll cast your line as there are trees and bush behind you. So it is good to practice this casting technique on dry land before you head out into back county to places like the Skook. You will be rewarded for all your practice and preparation once out on the river.

The fishing was quite good on this walk and wade with the average fish caught in the 12 to 13 inch slot, along with a few big chunky guys reaching a comfortable 16 inches. The cutthroats on this system have wintered well and they look very healthy and strong.

The biggest fish landed during this trip was a nice 17 inch cutthroat that had the fisher grinning from ear to ear as he fought, landed and released this big guy. One neat thing about the Skookumchuck River is that when the water is clear to the bottom as today, one can see the big cuts cruising around looking for food. This can actually shake you up a bit if you are not prepared to deal with it!

There were very few hatches on the River with only a few Yellow Sallies seen in the afternoon. Unless you are counting the mosquitoes. You must wear some bug protection when you are walking in the wilderness as they are out there in full force this year. All that cool, rainy spring weather left a lot of moist and wet areas for the mosquitoes to breed in!

The flies that were working on this trip were the Royal Wulffs, H&L Variants, Black Beetles, Orange and Yellow Stimulators and Black and Green Caddis flies (sized 12 to 16).

### **Regional Round-up:**

Fishing is great on all our rivers and streams right now. Do remember that British Columbia is single barbless hook country and the rivers in our South Eastern region of the Province are catch and release. Always remember to check out the fishing regulations before you go fishing on any of these streams to make sure you are compliant. You are out there to have a good time not to run into problems!

Hope to see you up here this summer!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss available days and the latest conditions.

### **(Report #12, 2011/07/30)**

#### **The Bull River is in prime form for dry fly fishing.**

Today we were off to float the majestic Bull River which is set in the Rocky Mountains of southern British Columbia. One bonus of this float is you get to see the stunning beauty of the “Steeple” on the ride along the way to the put-in.

The weather today was gorgeous. We had a high of 28°C (82°F) with a clear blue sky. Summer has finally come out in full force and we are experiencing her awesome beauty now.

The water conditions are currently excellent as the levels have slowly come down to the point where the Bull is completely fishable. The fish have been very happy this spring with the prolonged high water. The higher water also makes the float through the Blue Hole a fun ride as many of the anglers have already experienced this season.

On the Bull River, everyone wants to throw dry flies. So each angler had a 5 weight rod rigged up with dry line, an 8 to 9 foot leader and a dry fly of the guides choice tied on... and off we went.

The Bull River fished very well today. The average fish landed was in the 12 to 13 inch range. However, we did find a few select holes where the fish caught were more in the 13 to 16 inch slot. The

biggest fish caught and released was a lovely 17 inch cutthroat that had the distinct red slash below the jaw and looked plump and healthy. The cutthroats are very healthy this year as they have wintered well and obviously have been feeding heavily to date.

In terms of the dominant hatch, there were a few stone flies along with some Yellow Sallies. The most effective flies used today were the Stimulators (yellow and orange), Hi-vis Parachute Adams, as well as the regular Adams, Lime Trudes, Royal Wulffs and Caddis flies (yellow and tan) all in the 12-14 size. Foam patterns worked well, including Chernobyl Ants and Fat Alberts sized 10-14.

We were fortunate to see a good assortment of osprey and eagles during the float to go along with the stunning scenery and the great day of dry fly fishing.

The St. Mary, Elk and Bull rivers are all currently fishing great.

Come on up and experience the fishing for yourself.

Hope to see you soon.



St.Mary Angler

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss the latest conditions and our available days.

**(Report #11, 2011/07/21)**

**The Green Drakes make for some golden dry fly fishing on the St. Mary River!**

Today we floated the St. Mary River from the Power-line Road down to the St. Eugene Mission pull-out. This was a longer float than normal, covering three of the sections that we usually run individually. As the St.Mary River is moving along at a pretty good clip these days, we figured we could fit all three sections into one float and cover a lot of water.

The weather today was a nice comfortable temperature of 22°C (71°F), with a few high clouds and a light breeze that picked up in the afternoon.

The water conditions are still high for this time of year, but are dropping daily. The River is clearing and pockets are starting to form. The fish have been very happy with all this water, but are still on the move into their summer holds. So as fisherman we definitely have to look for the fish as we move down the River because they are not yet in the spots one would think they should be.

The dry fly fishing was very good today. As we floated down the Mary in early afternoon, we were fortunate to come across a Green Drake hatch. This is not a usual occurrence for the St. Mary River, but don't tell the fish as they were aggressively feeding on the surface and the fun was just about to begin. We knew if we could "match the hatch" and float the fly in front of the cutthroat's nose with no drag, we were in business. The hatch lasted two hours and each angler landed about 10 fish in that pocket of the St.Mary!

Overall the fishing was very good as each angler caught and released 20 fish. The cutthroats are very

healthy and pulled hard in the bigger current that the prolonged runoff has provided this season. The average size was a bit bigger today, around 13 to 14 inches in length, closer to 14 than 13.

The biggest fish was a nice 18 inch cutthroat, which is a very nice prize for the St. Mary. This fish was also chunky and had pretty colors to boot.

As I said earlier, the Green Drake hatch was the talk of the float. Everyone was excited to see the fish feed, and feed heavily for quite a period of time. It really provide a lot of excitement for all aboard.

The flies that were working today were the Green Drakes (of course), Hi-Vise Parachute Adams, Royal Wulff's, Fat Albert's and Stimulators sized 10 to 14.

In addition to the action on the water, the wildlife viewing along the St.Mary is excellent this time of year. We saw Bald and Golden Eagles up high in their nests tending and feeding their young. We also saw a few deer along the St. Mary Lake road.

The fishing is great now and we expect it to stay this way as we move into the summer season. If you can make the time, come check things out. Give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 for available days and daily conditions.

Hope to see you soon,



St.Mary Angler

PS One of the side benefits of this wet spring is that there is not one, sizable, forest fire currently burning in British Columbia!

**(Report #10, 2011/07/18)**

**St. Mary River is clearing up and providing excellent dry fly fishing opportunities for cutthroat.**

Today we decided that the St. Mary River is ready to float and fish! Due to the prolonged spring, our rivers are about three weeks behind schedule in terms of fishability. I guess fishing is a bit like farming in that the weather dictates when we can get out and “work the water”. On this trip we decided to run a double section of the St.Mary. We put-in at the Pump-house and drifted down to the Mission pull-out. The flow of the River at this time of year is such that it allows us to cover all this water comfortably during one float.

The weather was hot today with temperatures reaching 31°C (88°F). There was a little breeze, but the sky was clear and beautiful. It is nice to be on the water when it gets nice and warm! Good thing we brought along a big jug of lemon water because we needed it to stay hydrated on this early summer day on the water.

The St.Mary River is clear to about 8 to 10 feet from the outflow of St.Mary Lake all the way down to the “Great Clay Bank”. From this point downstream, with the bank still eroding, the clarity is reduced to around 4 to 6 feet. As the water recedes it will fall below the clay erosion zone and soon the water will be crystal clear.

The anglers dry fly fished all day today, mostly working the riffles, runs, pocket water and big pools from the boat. The inflatable drift boat allows anglers more accessibility to prime water at this point in the season than one can get from the shore line.

Today the River produced some nice fish that were caught and released. The two anglers caught 30 fish between them with the average size in the 13 to 14 inch class. All the fish looked very healthy with their trademark brilliant red slash below the jaw line. Again they looked like they have wintered well with a chunky build to accompany their brilliant colours.

The biggest cutthroat caught and released was a nice 17 incher that bolted into the current and put up a good fight before being brought to the boat. The fish in the River are still moving into their summer holding areas so you can go for awhile without touching a fish and then all of a sudden you find a group of them bunched up and feeding in a pocket. When you find this type of aggregation of cutthroat one can have some very productive fishing if your fly is on the menu! And that is exactly what happened today.

In one pocket of the float we experienced a Green Drake hatch. This was a little unusual because we generally expect to see this hatch associated with rainy days and it was beautiful out when it happened. The fish were feeding on the top surface like crazy and the anglers had fun casting directly to these hungry cutthroats.

The most effective flies were the usual suspects for this time of year. This includes the big attractor patterns such as Stimulators in orange and yellow (sized 10 to 14), Chernobyl Ants (sized 10 to 12), Stonefly patterns, again big sizes 10 to 12. We also had success with some traditional patterns such as Royal Wulffs, H&L Variants and Lime Trudes (sized 12 to 14). While all the above flies produced, it was still imperative for the anglers to get a good drift in order to excite the trout to come up and take it. Some of the foam patterns benefit from an additional shake to fool the trout in thinking it is a wounded bug on the surface. Whatever the fly, use good technique because I know you want the trout to take your fly and pull hard!

### **Regional Update:**

The water levels in the rivers in South Eastern British Columbia are coming down steadily and the fishing is getting better with each passing day.

Come on up and check it out!

Hope to see you on the water this summer.



**St.Mary Angler**

1-800-667-2311

**(Report #9, 2011/07/10)**

**Elk River Report: Spring conditions produce good early season results!**

Today looked like a great day to head out and fish the Elk River over towards Fernie, B.C. The Elk River flows out of the Rocky Mountain trench and eventually joins the Kootenay River below Fernie where the views are spectacular!

The weather today was a very comfortable 22°C (72°F) with a light breeze throughout the day. The Elk River can have some nasty winds, but today we were lucky and the wind did not effect our casting. In terms of water clarity, the Elk River had about two feet of visibility.

As soon as we put in, the anglers began casting their dry flies towards the bank edges where most of the fish seem to be holding now. Under high water conditions such as these, one must cast a lot and concentrate on mending the line each time in order to get a perfect drift. The Elk River cutthroat demand a good drift before they will come up and take the fly. These fish are not easily fooled, so technique and concentration will be rewarded! That said, you can always relay on Lady Luck to help you fool one or two of them, but I prefer doing the “hard work” myself!

The Elk River fished excellent today given the early season conditions. The average fish released was 12 to 13 inches in length and the anglers caught 25 cutthroats between the two of them. The fishing was steady and productive throughout the day. They probably lost another 15 cutthroats where the fish just popped off the line, or did not aggressively take the fly to begin with, so there was a lot of action to go around.

The anglers caught a few cutthroats that reached 16 inches and they surprisingly robust in terms of their girth. Again the cuts looked like they have wintered well. One active cut jumped right out of the water and slammed down onto the stone fly to eat it, and this 17 incher put up a good fight in addition. Overall the anglers had a great day and enjoyed themselves immensely! It was a great day to start the 2011 season.

The stoneflies were hatching all day long and the fish were obviously keying on them. In terms of what flies were most effective; stone patterns, orange and yellow stimulators (sized 12-14) were working great today.

There was also a lot of bird life viewed on the float including; a mother osprey watching over her young, a family of mergansers floating down stream and numerous Canadian geese lounging about on the banks.

### **St.Mary River Update:**

As the locals know, we have been patiently waiting for the river levels to come down throughout the south-eastern corner of B.C. We had an extremely high snow pack year this year in the Rocky and Purcell mountain ranges. This snow pack, combined with such a cool spring, has resulted in the run-off coming very slow and late this year.

The St. Mary River is dropping everyday and as of yesterday it had dropped about two and a half feet from its peak. The problem on the St. Mary is that there is a clay bank on one particular stretch that is still being eroded by high water. The result is that it is causing the lower part of the River to “muddy up”. However, with every day the levels on all the rivers are dropping and soon this problem on the Mary will be eliminated. Above the clay bank, the St.Mary has about 3 to 4 feet of visibility and is very fishable. As the St. Mary River drops, the fish are becoming very active. Those who are fortunate to get out early will be rewarded by those hungry cutthroats as one of the first to fish this spring.

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take Care,

Kelly

## St.Mary Angler

PS Since both the Elk and St. Mary are now very fishable, we are thankful the season has finally begun. Gives us a call at 1-800-667-2311 to stay in the loop on the latest conditions and book your trip today.

**(Report #8, 2011/06/27)**

### **St.Mary River Report: The Lake to Power Line Stretch Shows Early Season Promise.**

Today we decided to float the St.Mary River to see if it is fishable and if we can get out and start the dry fly fishing season. The weather was quite nice with a high of 25°C (77°F). The sky was pretty well clear, with only a few clouds and a light breeze blowing throughout the day. Looking up into the Purcell and Rocky Mountain ranges we can still see quite a lot of snow that has to make its way through the hydrological system. So the breeze off the mountains remains cool and this is noticeable when floating through shaded areas, but overall the weather was spectacular!

In general, the water conditions remain very high due to the spring run-off. On this trip we put in just below St.Mary Lake and floated down to the Power Line. This stretch of the River has cleared up and dropped in the last few days and looked pretty inviting. The Lake acts as a large filter for the upper St.Mary as it allows the sediment to slow and drop out of the water column so it can clear the main River below the Lake quite quickly. In order to fish this section with success, we need about three feet of visibility and we had that today. The water is moving quite quickly now and the fish are on the move. So while the River is starting to shape up, we expected to find some areas still devoid of any fish as they are still in the process of finding their summer holds.

We have to fish the water differently when the River is high like this. Walking and wading is definitely out of the question, so we concentrate on floating the River looking for back channels where the fish are holding in softer water in anticipation of lower levels and velocity, and more stable main channel habitat. So we drifted through the fast water and concentrated on the back channels.

The fishing was slow at the upper end of this section, but we did find some fish in specific areas as we moved down River. We knocked the rust off our dry fly fishing gear and were please to catch and released 10 cutthroats between the two of us. A reasonable result considering the early season conditions on the St.Mary River.

The fish we did catch and release were very healthy with the average size trout being from 13 to 14 inches. We did catch a lovely 15 inch cutthroat which reminded us just how hard these guys can pull. It was just so nice to be back out and dry fly fishing on this beautiful stream again.

The only hatch coming off today were big stone flies, which is very typical for this time of year. We caught the majority of the cutthroat on an orange stimulator (sizes 12 or 14).

In terms of wildlife, on the way up to the put the raft in we saw a group of whitetail deer, as well as two large elk grazing along the side of road. The ospreys were flying overhead during the float, so we had lots of company in search of trout.

### **Rivers Update:**

Since this float, we have had a couple of storms move through and drop rain up in the Purcell Mountain Range which has caused the St. Mary to explode and run very high and dirty. The water is so high it is causing some of the clay banks to let loose and dirty the water up even more. So the St. Mary River is likely not fishable until early July. We will keep an eye on the rivers and let you know the status as it changes. There is lots of water this year!

Take Care,

Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS We are getting close to the start of the season so feel free to give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss available days and river conditions.

**(Report #7, 2011/06/20)**

### **Small Lake Fishes Big!**

Today we decided to go fishing on one of the many lakes in our part of the East Kootenay's. Our choice was Small Lake, which is located up and behind Wasa Lake. It is a very wild and scenic area with a lot of potential to catch some nice sized rainbows, so we decided to check it out.

The weather looked beautiful this morning as we packed the gear into the truck and headed out for a great day of fishing. The temperature ended up at a very comfortable 20°C (68°F). During the day some thunder clouds rolled through and at one point it rained for about 30 minutes. That said, there was very little wind and when it stopped raining it warmed right up and became absolutely beautiful. You know that incredible clarity of colour after a rainstorm when the sun bursts out from the clouds and brightens

everything up. As it turns out we could not have asked for better conditions. The Lake was very calm and clear right to the bottom. The Lake itself is still pretty high, as the snowpack continues to add water, but it had no adverse effect on the fishing.

Once we were out on the water, we pulled out the chironomid rigs and readied them for action. Our game plan was to look around the Lake to see if we could spot any cruising fish. The first thing we did was set up near the shallows in about 8 to 10 feet of water and cast towards a drop off ledge. It was not long before we saw some big trout cruising along the edge.

Most fishers always go to their favorite spot on a lake as soon as they arrive. While this may provide success, we find it most beneficial to try and spot the fish before anchoring up and starting to fish. You never know, perhaps the fish are not in your favorite spot every time out, so we feel it is always good to have a 'look and see' first.

The fishing today was smoke'n hot to say the least. During the course of the day we did not go any longer than 15 minutes without a fish on the end of the line. We caught and released almost 30 fish and lost almost that many as well! It was a great day all around as the fish were very active. All the trout we caught and released were chrome bright silver and very healthy looking - we did not land any spawners. The bulk of the rainbows caught were in the 18 to 20 inch class.

The biggest fish caught on this day was a 25 inch chrome silver rainbow trout whose first run took the angler 50 yards into his backing. It jumped twice clear out of the water and shook its head trying to get

away. Fortunately, the client was able to land this 6 pound beauty in order to take some pictures to go along with some great memories.

Hatches on the water included Callebatis May Flies, in addition to some very small chironomids that were coming off throughout the day. The patterns that were most productive were the damsel flies, the Chromie with a black rib and the Callebatis nymphs.

While out on the water we noticed a bald eagle high up in his nest scouting for its next meal. As it turned out, the target for that meal happened to be a group of baby wood ducks cruising along the shallows with their mother. Fortunately for the ducks, they saw the eagle dive towards them and we could hear the screeching chicks. So all the baby ducks dove down under the water to get away from the clutches of that nasty big eagle as it went swooping by! I guess the eagle will have to try again later! Good luck to the ducks!

### **Runoff Update:**

As you may be aware, we still have a lot of snow in the high country which is making its way down through the lakes and rivers in full force now. The rivers, which theoretically opened for fishing on June 15th, are very high and dirty as we speak. We suspect that the fishing on the St. Mary and Elk will not begin until around July 10th.

Hope you are getting out to fish, and we hope to see you on the water this summer.

Take care,



**St. Mary Angler**

PS call 1-800-667-2311 to discuss available days and conditions throughout the season.

### **(Report #6, 2011/06/03)**

#### **Premier Lake Report**

Today we decided to head out and fish Premier Lake. Premier Lake really is a great lake to fish. The average sized trout is pretty good with the added bonus of some bigger rainbows that can be hooked if one gets lucky!

We have had a lot of rainy days this spring and today it was quite cool with periods of light rain. The wind picked up somewhat, but at least on Premier one can find places to hide out of the wind, and that is exactly what we did a couple of times.

The water level remains a little high now, but is clear, normal for this time of year.

We had our fly rods rigged up and ready to go before we got into the boat. Once on the water, we immediately started to explore the Lake. We always like to cruise around to our favorite spots to see if the fish are the known areas or not. It is always a bonus to actually spot fish before you bother to set the anchors and get situated. Today we wanted to get out of the wind so we found a really nice bay where

there is great structure along the shore line where the fish like to cruise along and feed.

We anchored our boat with the wind to our backs and pulled out our chironomid rods. We casted our 15 foot leaders towards the drop off ledge and let the chironomid sink down. We always put a little b-b shot about a foot above the fly so the chironomid sinks fast to the depth we are targeting. Then we retrieve the fly slowly back towards the boat, pausing between the pulls and keeping a keen eye on the strike indicator for any movement. This method can be very successful when the hatch is on.

The fishing in the morning was slow, but by checking out a number of our favorite spots, we found some fish cruising. So we started to pick up fish in the afternoon. With this type of fishing you have to be very patient, but it can be worth it when you tie into them. Throughout the day we caught and released 5 fish each, which is a little slow for Premier, but that is fishing — you never know from day to day.

The biggest fish caught and released was a nice 20 inch rainbow which made the day. It pulled very hard and refused to come towards the boat. The fish took us into the backing 3 times! It was a very healthy, strong fish and since it was not spawning, it was very bright and silver looking.

Chironomids were hatching throughout the day, as well as, Callebatis Mayflies. The flies that were effective were chironomids (such as Snow Cones, Chromies and Red D's) and May Fly patterns

(Copper Johns, Lightening Bugs, Prince Nymphs and Hare's Ears). If we had used a wet line, patterns such as Doc Spratley, a leech or Woolly Buggers would have likely worked as well.

### **Rivers Update:**

The St.Mary and Elk rivers are high as they are now in peak runoff. We should know the changes to the river morphology are in a few weeks.

Summer is just around the corner so book now and come and enjoy some of the finest dry fly fishing in Western Canada.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

1-800-667-2311

### **(Report #5, 2011/05/28)**

#### **The Columbia River is running high, but producing well!**

We are back fishing for rainbows on the Columbia River this week. We decided to fish the section from just above the City of Castlegar down to the riverside hamlet of Genelle. There is a lot of water moving through the River now, which is providing a lot of different runs and back eddies for us to venture into this time of year.

The weather is having a hard time staying nice. Fortunately the temperature today reached 19°C (66° Fahrenheit) with only a bit of wind later in the afternoon and a few clouds hovering over head

throughout the day. So the conditions were pretty good.

The River is very high right now due to all the snow in the headwaters of the Columbia and the power utilities need to move a lot of water through the dams in anticipation of a big and late spring freshet. It has leveled off at 120,000 cubic feet per second with 6 feet of clarity. The River has a bit of debris floating in it now, but this is limited to specific sections that we can avoid.

With the water levels higher at this time of year, finding out where the fish are holding can be a challenge. Under these conditions one must be ready for many different scenarios. In recognizing this, we had all our rods rigged up and ready to go in advance of hitting the water. We had one rod set up for dry fly fishing, one for nymph fishing and one rod set up for streamer fishing!

Today we found a pocket of surface feeding fish and so we grabbed our dry-fly lines and began casting above the feeders. Our goal was to get a good drift into the middle of the feeding fish so we could have a good opportunity to hook one of these robust rainbows.

In the pocket of surface feeders we managed to hook up 4 nice rainbows using the dry fly method. It was very exciting to see a nice size rainbow come up and take the dry fly. The only thing one has to remember is to let the fish run once they hook themselves up. It is extremely easy for these fish to break the fly off if they head towards the fast moving current and you don't let them run! And invariably that is where they all want to go once hooked!

After fishing for awhile in that one hole we decided to move downstream to another section to use our streamer setups. Our approach was to toss and drift the streamers along the bank edges in hopes of hooking a big guy. We were quite successful in this method of fishing as well!

On the trip the lone angler in the boat caught and released 10 rainbows, with the biggest fish being a nice 22 inch trout. All the fish caught were very healthy and strong fighters with the average size being 18 inches. It was exciting to have the opportunity to hook one of these guys.

The caddis fly hatch was coming off when we were dry fly fishing and some mayflies were hatching as well throughout the day.

The flies that were working well on this particular trip were big sized Prince Nymphs and Hares Ears (12 to 14), as well as our custom tied Super Streamer. The dry flies of choice were the Caddis Pupa size 14 to 18.

During the trip we saw a few ospreys and eagles soaring above the River looking for their next meal. It always is a peaceful feeling to see animals in their own habitat doing their thing while we do ours.

### **Regional Report:**

The rivers are in full run-off mode now and we are getting excited for the river fishing season to begin on the St. Mary and Elk rivers. Lake fishing is in full go now and guys are having good days and slow days out on the lakes. It just depends on the day and if the fish are feeding aggressively or not.

Take care and tight lines,



**St.Mary Angler**

PS Give us a call to discuss fishing conditions or to make arrangements to come up and visit us this summer. You won't be disappointed.

**(Report #4, 2011/05/23)**

**Lazy Lake provides a beautiful setting for a great day on the water!**

Lake fishing is going strong in the East Kootenay region of B.C. as Premier and Whiteswan lakes are now very busy with campers and fisherman. The nice thing about our region is once you decide to get the line wet, there are many lakes to choose from. We decided to fish Lazy Lake to avoid all those folks getting out on Premier and Whiteswan for the Canadian long weekend.

The weather on the day was just great, a complete break from the week before when the wind was gusting up to 30 kilometers per hour. As I have mentioned previously, we have had crazy weather this spring! Today the sun was out and the temperature reached 18°C (65° Fahrenheit) with very little wind. The conditions were perfect!

Lazy Lake has already turned over and is very clear as we could easily see fish cruising along the shoreline feeding. So we rigged up the rod with a dry line, 18 foot leader and tippet, moveable quick release indicator, bb-shot and of course the chironomid of choice. Our initial approach today was to move around the Lake to check out the different areas and depths in order to locate where the fish are. So we fished for awhile in the shallows moving our indicator down the line to the desired depth. Then we moved out into the middle of the Lake to fish the deeper sections. It is really useful to move around a lake when you first get onto the water so you can locate the fish and identify what depth they are feeding at right away.

The fishing started off slow in the morning, but by early afternoon the fishing turned on. We started catching the rainbows in the shallow part of the Lake at a good rate then moved onto the deeper waters. The average size of fish caught on the day was 15 to 16 inches, and we landed a few nice ones over 17 inches. The fish were very active and once hooked, jumped many times out of the water trying to slip the hook. The rainbows have wintered well and look very healthy and some seem to already be getting a little chunky!

The biggest rainbow trout caught and released was a nice 18 incher. On the day we caught and released 17 fish between the two of us. We really had a great time catching some nice fish in addition to enjoying a lovely spring day out in nature enjoying some much needed sun.

The reason the fish turned on in the early afternoon was because of a Callebatis May Fly hatch, and the action was sustained by a number of small Chironomid hatches later on.

In the morning we saw a big bald eagle perching in one of the trees along the Lake. While we were still waiting to catch our first fish we saw him flying overhead with a trout locked in the talons. So that was a sign of better things to come on the day.

During the hatches we used our own grey and black Callebatis pattern, Hare's Ear, Lightning Bugs and Copper Johns. As for Chironomid's we used the Snow Cone, Chromie and Red Daiichi fly patterns. If you use a wet line technique, the Woolly Bugger, the Egg Sucking Leech and Doc Spratley all will work well too.

The Lakes have been fishing very well, but the spring has been quite cool. The runoff on the St. Mary and Elk rivers has started in earnest, but we are still getting snow up in the high country. We are expecting a big runoff this spring once it does come. Therefore, we are also expecting some changes in the river channels with logjams being cleaned out and moved around from some areas and possibly

the river channels with logjams being cleared out and moved around from some areas and possibly some changes to the river course as well. The river fishing should be great this season as there should be lots of water throughout the summer and into the fall.

Take care,

Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a few days of great dry fly fishing this summer.

**(Report #3, 2011/05/19)**

**Premier Lake has iced off, turned over and is fishing well!**

In the last couple of weeks we have been fishing a few of the alpine lakes in Region 4 of southeast British Columbia. The ice started to come off the lower elevation lakes in the middle of April, but with the cooler weather some of the higher ones have taken a little while to ice off and turn over. Today we choose to head up to one of our favorites, Premier Lake. We really like this Lake because it provides a number of areas to fish so many anglers can enjoy it at the same time.

May is one of the prime months for fishing Premier Lake because of its robust chironomid hatches. The weather on this day was very pleasant, if not warm, with temperatures reaching 18° Celsius (65° Fahrenheit). There were a few clouds high in the sky with the odd sporadic gust of wind throughout the course of the day.

Premier Lake is at its normal level and clarity for this time of year. Most of the lakes around this area have already gone through turn-over and it has happened at Premier as well. The timing of the turn-over depends on the size and depth of each lake so it happens at different rates depending on the configuration of the lake itself. When turn-over occurs it causes the mixing of water which brings up nutrient rich water from the bottom of the lake. This causes algae to start growing due to the available nutrients. More algae means more biological activity and ultimately more food for fish.

Today we rigged up a couple rod setups in anticipation of getting on the water. We strung a chironomid rod with a dry line, an 18 foot leader, a quick release indicator, and a b-b shot a foot above the fly. On the second rod we strung a wet line with a 9 foot leader and a wet fly of choice. It is always good to be prepared in advance for whatever situation may arise on the lake.

Once we had our rods organized we headed out on the water to find a drop-off ledge where we anchored our boat with the wind to our backs. We then began casting our chironomid setups out over the ledge. You must let the fly sink for a few seconds before you start retrieving it. Patience is good attribute to have because if you pick up your fly to cast again too soon, you might not hook that fish which is tracking it right back to your boat!

Just remember to keep your eye on the strike indicator. If the chironomid hatch is on you will know it, but as with everything out of the water, if you are not touching a fish you have to either lengthen or shorten your leader. And don't be shy to move closer to shore, or move further out if you are not touching them.

The fishing today was quite good with most of the fish landed in the 15 to 17 inch slot. Some fish are still spawning, but the ones we caught on the day were nice and healthy. They obviously have wintered well. The biggest fish landed was a nice 18 inch rainbow that gave us a good fight. This one was out of the water quite a bit, jumping almost into the boat (really). The two anglers caught and released about 30 fish on this trip.

In terms of the hatches, chironomids were coming off throughout the day and the fish were keying on them as they hatched.

The flies that were most effective today, and in general for this time of year, are the many different types of chironomids that are available including Snow-Cones, Red Daiichi and Chromies. In addition, Leeches, Woolly-buggers and Doc Spratley's were working well with the wet line technique.

Many lakes have been fishing very well this past month and all the lakes in this region are now iced off (finally!). It has been a crazy prolonged spring, but good weather IS on the way.

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

Take care,

Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS call us at 1-800-667-2311 to check for available days throughout the season.

**(Report #2, 2011/05/14)**

**Columbia River Report: The water is rising as the spring freshet starts in earnest.**

During the last month we have been concentrating on fishing the Columbia River. We use a customized jet boat that gives anglers a lot of choices once they are out on the River. The section we fished today was the lower section below Genelle stretching down to Trail, B.C. This section has many nice runs and big back eddies to fish for the big sleek rainbows that inhabit this water.

This weekend turned out to be very nice. The temperature reached a high of 20° Celsius (68° Fahrenheit) which feels great out on the water this time of year. There were a few clouds in the sky and by mid afternoon the wind picked up somewhat, but it was a very nice day on balance.

The snow pack has just started to melt and the small streams are starting to swell. As this stretch of the Columbia River is controlled by upstream dams, the water remains clear. That said, more water is being released from the dams into this stretch of the Columbia. They have to put the water somewhere so we were expecting to see levels rise as the freshet builds. This is common for this time of year.

With water levels rising we decided to continue the streamer method of fishing which has been very successful in the past month. The guides have also been working hard to locate where the fish are

holding beyond their normal favorite spots, so they have been fishing the smaller back eddies of the River. The trout are not yet showing up along the bank edges and are still holding in deep water, so the guides are going after them to find out where they are.

On today's trip the fishing was slow in the morning, but picked up by mid afternoon. The fish caught today were between 16 to 20 inches with the largest fish being a beautiful 22 inch hen. Each angler caught and released 6 to 8 rainbows, but had more opportunities to land fish. This is a big powerful piece of water and these strong fish combined with the River's strong current caused them to break a few off. Thus is the challenge of big fish in big water!

There were no caddis or may fly hatches to speak of today, therefore the fish were not high up in the water column. This is quite unusual for this time of year, but is due to the very cool spring we have been experiencing.

In terms of the artificials, again we had good success with the "Super Streamer", as well as with the Prince Nymphs and larger sized Egg Sucking Leaches.

We are expecting the good hatches on the Columbia to begin anytime. Mayflies and Black Caddis will be the first to dominate. Then we usually get a good ant hatch as well. With the cold wet spring the hatches have been delayed somewhat, but we are expecting things to heat up shortly!

Hope to see you on the water this summer. Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss fishing conditions or available days.

Take care,



St.Mary Angler

**(Report #1, 2011/04/30)**

### **The Columbia River has been fishing well since mid April!**

The fishing season has begun in the Kootenay region of South-eastern British Columbia. The long winter is finally melting away and spring is here! The Mighty Columbia River has been fishing very well since the middle of April and today was no exception. On this trip out we decided to fish the section of the Columbia River we call the "Genelle Run". It is a 15 kilometer stretch of water perfectly suited for our customized jet boat. The use of the jet boat allows us to move anglers quickly up river and the customization allows us to float down and through the big eddies rowing as needed to keep you in optimal fishing water.

The weather has been crazy this spring. We have had many days of mixed weather, ranging from wind to rain and even snow flurries! The snow-pack in the mountains is over 100 percent, which means lots of water for our rivers and lakes throughout the coming season. Today's weather was one of the first days that we could actually call "beautiful". It was nice in the morning with the temperature reaching 12° Celsius by mid afternoon (54° Fahrenheit). Some clouds moved in as the day progressed, but it was most enjoyable throughout the trip.

The water conditions for this time of year are normal with good clarity and water levels low at about 53,500 CFS (Cubic Feet per Second). The average temperature of the water is hovering in the mid-forties F. Those of you who know the Columbia, know it is a big brawling piece of water. The tailwater section we work stretches from just below the confluence with the Kootenay River down to the Canada/U.S. border. This is about 50 miles of River. It is marked by long runs and big back eddies and can run in depth from a few feet to over two hundred. The River bottom is made up by an assortment of gravel and cobbles to huge boulders.

On today's trip we set up three different rod configurations in anticipation of hooking up some big rainbows. One rod was set for streamer fishing, one for nymph fishing and the third for dry fly fishing. You have to be prepared in advance as there is no point spending prime time on the water wrestling with gear! The Columbia is a classic rainbow fishery so it can get tough sometimes and you have to be prepared to nymph, streamer fish, or dry fly-fish when the opportunity presents itself.

On this foray we ended up casting mostly streamers and were well rewarded for our efforts. The rainbows we landed today fell into the 18 to 23 inch range. We caught and released 22 hard fighting Columbia rainbows and they were all fat and in great condition.

In terms of fish of note, we landed a spectacular looking 23-inch rainbow, a very nice fish indeed. We also hooked into two others which were likely even larger, but were not able to land them!

The most noticeable hatch on the River was a batch of Blue Winged Olives in addition to a few Callibaetis May Flies. That said, the fish seemed very interested in our streamer patterns and we were very grateful for that.

We were not the only ones out fishing on the River today as we came across two river otters fishing along one of the bank walls. We also spied a couple turkey vultures and some bald eagles flying around, in addition to lots of wood ducks. It was a good day for wildlife viewing in addition to the fishing.

### **Patterns:**

We have developed several very specific streamer patterns for the Columbia River, which have proven very effective. We call them the Super Streamer Series and when you are out on the water with us we will introduce you to them. Other patterns that are working well now include the Callibaetis Emerger patterns and Stone Fly Nymphs.

### **Lake Fishing in the East Kootenays:**

The alpine lakes in the East Kootenays are in the process of icing off. While White-Swan and White-Tail lakes are still iced over, Premier, Lazy, Larchwood, Echo and all the lower elevation lakes are ice-free and fishing quite well. Chironomids (Red D, Snowcones and Chromies), as well as, big leech patterns like Woolly Buggers are working quite well. We encourage you to get out and enjoy spring now that it is finally here.

We hope you get out on the water this spring or summer!

Take care,



St. Marv Angler

St. Mary Angler

PS call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss the current conditions on the Columbia River, or the available days for fishing throughout the season.