

# ST.MARY ANGLER FLY SHOP

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## St.Mary Angler: 2012 Season in Review

### Overview

Last winter again left us with a big snowpack in the mountains of southeastern British Columbia. As of May 15th the “Snow Survey and Water Supply Bulletin” revealed the snowpack in the Kootenay River watershed was 154% of normal and over in the Columbia it was 123%. This left us with more than adequate flows in our rivers throughout the 2012 season.

Normally the snow really starts to melt in the middle of April in our part of the world. However this year again was cooler than normal in April, May and June that led to a delay in the onset of the bulk of the snow melt by 2 to 3 weeks. This created a prolonged freshet throughout our region.

Rainfall during the 2012 also played a big roll in the flow of the rivers during the spring. While May was drier than normal, June saw a deluge of rain at a rate of 230% of the long term average. So the freshet was not only prolonged, but bigger than normal so the rivers saw a lot of colour as the sediments were resorted throughout the river channels.

Once the freshet passed, the conditions on our rivers were excellent in terms of fishability, floatability and having lots of cool, oxygenated water for the trout. The higher than normal rainfall in June and July were replaced by lower than average precipitation in August and September. In terms of temperatures, after cooler than normal conditions in May and June, things warmed up considerably beyond the long term average in July, August and September. So on the whole the spring was wet and cooler than normal, but the balance of the fishing season was drier and warmer than usual, perfect conditions for fly fishing the rivers of southeastern British Columbia.

In April the fishing season started with us guiding for the big rainbow trout on the Upper Columbia River south of Castlegar B.C. We started the summer fishing season on the St.Mary and Elk rivers in early July. The season lasted into late September on the St.Mary

and Elk rivers and until late October over on the Columbia River in the West Kootenays. So we enjoyed a long fishing season in 2012 with good weather and plenty of water which provided many great days of fly fishing for everyone.

Rainfall (Millimeters at Station ‘Cranbrook A’):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Rainfall in 2012	9.8 mm (.4 inches)	123 mm (4.84 in.)	43.8 mm (1.73 in.)	10.6 mm (.417 in.)	21.8 mm .86 in.)
Rainfall in 2011	45.8 mm	56.4 mm	28.6 mm	28.8 mm	14.6 mm
Average Monthly Rainfall (long term)	42.6 mm (1.7 in.)	52.7 mm(2.1 in.)	38.2 mm (1.5 in.)	31.6 mm (1.24 in.)	27.3 mm (1.08)

Temperature (Celsius at Station ‘Cranbrook A’):

Month	May	June	July	August	September
Temperature in 2012	17.6°C (63.7°F)	18.9°C (66°F)	27.4°C (81.3°F)	28.4°C (83.1°F)	22.7°C (72.9°F)
Temperature in 2011	16.5°C	20°C	25.2°C	27.9°C	23.4°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**

The stretch of the Upper Columbia River we fish for big rainbows is the 35 mile portion between Castlegar, B.C to the Canada-U.S. Border. We fly fish this piece of River from our 16 foot jet boat which we have customized to allow us to row through the big eddies, riffles and long runs.

The Columbia River provided anglers with lots of excellent fishing days from early April to mid June and produced very well. 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 bulk of the rainbows caught this spring were in the in the 18-22 inch slot with the odd big fish of 23+ thrown in. On the first trip out an angler landed a nice 22 incher that they said looked “very steelhead like”. There were many occasions when the rainbows took the anglers into their backing this spring. This stretch of the Upper Columbia River fished very well and experienced some excellent weather and a lot of great midge and caddis hatches to go along with it.

As a tailwater fishery regulated by the upstream dams, the spring flows on the Upper Columbia are moderated which leads to excellent conditions at the front end of the fishing season when other rivers have not yet become fishable.

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

Again the big snowpack in combination with the cool spring meant we did not start guiding trips on the St.Mary and Elk until July 11th. This was about 2 weeks behind when we prefer to hit the water. The rivers were in great shape even though we had a lot of runoff this spring.

Right of way we were seeing good stonefly and yellow salley hatches on the St.Mary River. The Wild Westslope Cutthroats were eager to take the dry flies from our first trip out as they looked bright and strong.



By mid July the conditions were good on the Bull River and by the end of the month conditions were prime on St.Mary and Elk. On one late July trip out on the St.Mary, the two anglers caught 25 cuts each in the 13-14 inch class with a couple over 17. The cutthroats were feeding very aggressively on the surface.

By mid August all the rivers were in their summer groove with optimal flows and structure, accompanied by excellent water clarity. The result of the great conditions meant the anglers were tearing things up with good catch rates of very healthy cuts. The weather was also hot and dry. The anglers were catching cutthroats in the 13 – 15 inch average slot with some nice big cuts over 17 inches turning up on both the St.Mary and Elk Rivers. On one occasion a big cut-bow over 18 inches was landed. By the end of the month the average size of fish landed seemed to be getting a little bigger and the grasshoppers were everywhere.

September started with a bang on the Elk River with a big hatch of Blue Winged Olives. The fish were gorging themselves which provided the anglers with about 25 cutthroats each in the 15 inch slot. As always, the October Caddis and Pale Morning Dunns joined the BWO hatches and September provided some awesome fishing on the Elk, St.Mary and Skookumchuck Rivers. The water flows and catch rates remained good and some big fish, including a 23 inch cut-bow were landed to much delight. Fall really is a wonderful time to fish the rivers of southeastern B.C.

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

## ANOTHER YEAR OF FISHING ON THE UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER

After the season ended on the St.Mary, Elk, Skookumchuck and Bull Rivers in later September, we went back over to the Upper Columbia to chase the big fall rainbow trout. The weather was excellent for fall fly fishing. The temperature was a comfortable 16°C (60°F) with clear blue skies on October 3rd. The water clarity on the Columbia River was very good with excellent structure and flow. On this day the Columbia fished amazingly. Between the two anglers they brought in over 30 fish — 15 big rainbows each, wow. The average size was between 18 and 22 inches. The biggest fish caught and released was a beautiful 24 inch rainbow that jumped like crazy and took the line all the way into the backing.

The average size of the rainbows landed in the fall was 18-22 inches with bigger trout over 24 inches being wrestled in. On the last trip of the season a robust 24 inch rainbow was caught and released. The last float on the Columbia was in late October, ending the 2012 season.



So there you have it, another year of fishing with the St.Mary Angler is complete. In 2012 we were blessed with a lot of great fishing in both the East and West Kootenays of British Columbia. The spring fishing on the Columbia was very good and the fall component was, frankly, fantastic. The summer season on the St.Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck rivers produced some awesome catches of hungry Wild Westslope Cutthroats.

After a soggy and cool spring, we were lucky to have good weather during the balance of the season, 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 tradeshow 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 2013.

Take care,

*Kelly & Karen*

## Kelly and Karen Laatsch, St.Mary Angler

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

# 2012 Fishing Reports

### (Report #20 (October 17th, 2012))

#### **The Upper Columbia River keeps on producing big rainbows deep into October!**

Today was our last day of guiding on the upper Columbia River this fall. We fished the Castlegar to Genelle stretch of the River. The fishing on the Columbia this fall has been absolutely one of the best in recent years. The spring fishing earlier in the year was also very productive.

The weather again was very nice on this trip. The morning was its normal cool temperature and as the day progressed things reached up to a comfortable 59°F (15°C). With the sun shining brightly, 59° felt pretty nice on the River. While we like it warm, the rainbows are unaffected by the fall temperatures as they continue to be very active.

The water conditions are fall 'normal' in terms of flow for this time of year. The clarity of the water is very good providing visibility down to 10 feet. That said, these rainbows have such good camouflage one cannot see them in the water even with this level of clarity!

One favourite technique we use when fishing for these big rainbows is to be very patient when retrieving the line back from a cast. Do not pick it up too quickly as sometimes the fish follow the fly right back to the boat. So take your time and do not rush as they can take it close in when you least expect it!

During the day the anglers used a couple of basic fishing methods including casting towards the bank edges and stripping their streamers back, and throwing their nymphs through the runs trying to pick up the nice rainbows. Once the temperature peaked for the day the rainbows began feeding on the surface and the anglers got some chances to dry fly fish. It is crazy how these fish are still coming up to the surface at this time of year, but given the unique nature of this stream and due to the weather, the opportunities are still there for casting the dries!

The Columbia River has fished very well again this week and on this day in particular. Today the anglers caught and released 10 to 12 rainbows each. The average size of the fish landed was 18 to 22 inches and they are very chunky now with brilliant colour.

The biggest fish landed was a nice 24 incher and once again it took the angler into his backing quite a ways. This rainbow jumped right out of the water a few times, putting on quite a show. Finally, the fish was brought in and the angler was quite excited to see just how big it was. It was a good time and everyone was very happy to see it landed and released!

Small tan caddis, size 14, and October Caddis, size 10-12, were hatching on the Columbia today. In terms of the artificials we used, all streamers were working well, in addition to the October Caddis size 10-12.

During the float we saw a beaver patrolling the shore line by its home. as well as. a black bear down

along the bank edges eating roots and bugs. It rounded out a great day of fishing for rainbows on the Columbia.

### **That's All Folks:**

Well another successful season is in the books for the St. Mary Angler Guide Service. We would like to thank everyone who came and fished with us this year and hopefully we will see you back again.

We have already started to take bookings for the 2013 season so if you know when you are coming back, please feel free to give us a call and reserve your days now!

Have a great winter and check in later this fall for our [tradeshow](#) schedule.

Take care,



St.Mary Angler

1-800-667-2311

### **Report #19 (October 9th, 2012)**

#### **Columbia River Report: The Big Rainbows are Plentiful!**

Today we were back on the stretch of the Columbia that flows between Castlegar B.C. and the riverside hamlet of Genelle. This area is about 25-35 miles upstream of the Canada/U.S. border.

The weather remains very good as the high pressure system is holding and keeping the storms up north of us. The days are starting off cool, but warm up to 60-65°F (16-18°C) by mid afternoon. The skies are clear blue and the contrasting fall colors create some stunning eye candy in this part of the world in the fall. There was very little wind on this day, which is always a plus when one is fly-fishing!

The water on the Columbia is gin clear and at its normal level for this time of year.

Because of the weather, the fish are still coming up to the surface to feed on dry flies, in addition to taking the streamer and nymphs below. The fish can sense that winter is coming and are still feeding aggressively to fatten up before the cold! Once again, we mainly throw nymphs, but we have each rod rigged up with all the possibilities including fishing dry flies, nymphs and streamers. We have each rod handy so we can pick the appropriate stick when the circumstance dictates.

The Columbia River fished very well today. The angler landed over 20 big rainbows averaging 17 to 20 inches. He landed a nice 22 inch rainbow on a dry which gave him an unreal fight right to the end. The rainbow took him into his backing many times. If these rainbows get you out into the fast moving current it can be hell on wheels to land them. The trick is to try and pull him into the softer water to tire him out as soon as you hook him - which is easier said than done! Finally, after a great fight the angler brought him in and took the pictures because landing a big rainbow on a dry fly is a memorable accomplishment!

Again the female October Caddis were out and dropping their eggs on the water today, and small midges were hatching in the late afternoon. It is real cool to see the October Caddis fall to the water and

midges were hatching in the late afternoon. It is real cool to see the October Caddis fall to the water and drop her eggs. As the weather is holding, these occurrences will continue along for some time.

Today they used a few different streamers and nymph patterns including Woolly Buggers, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Prince Nymph and the Caddis dry fly patterns. These all work well, but we always like to keep trying new patterns when we are fly-fishing out of the Columbia.

Today we saw a black bear down by the River. Walking along the bank edges digging at roots and looking for food to hold him over the winter months, just like the fish!

We will continue guiding on the Columbia River for a couple more weeks. So come on up and feel these big guys tug at the end of your line—it sure is a rush!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call me at 1-800-667-2311 to book a day of chasing rainbows on the upper Columbia River.

### **Report #18 (October 3rd, 2012)**

#### **Columbia River Report: The Conditions are Prime and the Big Rainbows Abound!**

We have now moved operations over to the West Kootenays in pursuit of the big fall rainbows on the upper Columbia River. We have been guiding on the Columbia for about a week and the Big River is in prime shape! Today we fished the stretch of the Columbia between the City of Trail and the Canada–U.S. border.

The weather is absolutely beautiful. Crisp and cool in the mornings, warming up to 60°F (16°C) in the afternoon under clear skies. The leaves on the trees are turning that beautiful hue of red and orange. Fall is definitely here now and it is beautiful out on the River, my favorite time of year!

The Columbia River system had a lot of water in it this season and the flows are still pretty good. The water clarity is pristine. It is amazing how clear the water is — it is crystal clear down to 10 to 12 feet.

We launched the boat and jetted down to our first run. We turned the motor off and began to row along the bank edges. We had each angler's rods setup and ready to go in advance — a dry line, a streamer setup and the last rod rigged with a nymph. The Columbia offers many ways to catch fish and it is most efficient to be prepared in advance with multiple rods. Our approach was to cast toward the bank edges as we drifted along with a streamer setup, stripping the line back in towards the boat. Often we would see some rainbows rising so we would pick up the dry fly rod and cast into the pods of rising fish. It is very exciting to see these big rainbows coming to your dry fly.

The River fished amazingly well today. I think the rainbows are keenly aware that winter is coming and they are feeding aggressively to fatten up before the cold weather sets in. Between the two anglers they brought in over 30 fish — 15 big rainbows each, wow. The average size was between 18 and 22 inches.

The biggest fish caught and released was a beautiful 24 inch rainbow that jumped like crazy and took

the line all the way into the backing! The trout on the Columbia are very chunky and have beautiful red stripes and markings. These rainbows are very healthy and strong - they have obviously eaten quite well over the summer!

The hatches coming off today included Caddis and some Big October Caddis. The October Caddis were dropping their eggs on the water and it was cool to see them hit the surface 5 or 6 times as they released them. The flies that worked very best were Kelly's Super Streamer, October Caddis dry fly and variety of nymphs including hare's ear, prince nymph and lightening bugs.

The fishing has been very good on the Columbia River this fall and it looks like the weather is holding into mid October. This is the time to come and check out the Columbia – it is truly outstanding!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call me at 1-800-667-2311 to chat about the big rainbows and find out about available days.

### **(Report #17 (September 16th, 2012))**

#### **The St.Mary River provides a spectacular day of dry fly-fishing!**

It has been a beautiful start to the fall in the East Kootenay region of B.C. We have taken advantage of the mild weather to get out on the rivers and fly fish for wild West-Slope Cutthroats as much as we can. Today we stayed close to Kimberley and fished the St. Mary River. We floated the Canyon section which runs between Wycliffe and the take-out spot at the Mission. It is a very nice run with a diversity of river habitats that allow us to pull over and fish from shore, in addition to drifting the bank edges, around big rocks and fallen trees in the boat.

The current high pressure system is still holding the beautiful weather in our area! We could not ask for much nicer weather at this time of year. The temperature on this float reached a comfortable 77°F (25°C). It remains refreshingly cool in the mornings and evenings, but warms up comfortably in the afternoon. I think it is the best month of the year!

The water level on the St.Mary is close to normal for this time of year. The guides are only having to get out of the boat a couple of times per trip to pull it over the rocks, so flows remain pretty good.

The dry fly fishing was spectacular on this particular day. The guides pulled out a few favourite flies from their personal boxes and told the anglers to make nice, short casts up into the runs and along the bank edges. As always success is tied to ensuring the fly has a natural float so the key is to continue to cast and mend until a big head comes up and tries to eat the fly. Remember to let them gobble it up before you lift the rod. These fish can be painfully slow in hooking up and 9 times out of 10 anglers will pull the fly right out of their mouths until they learn patience.

Today was a very good day for catching cutthroats. Each client caught and released about 25 fish and all were nice sized.

On this trip we caught the biggest fish of the year, which if you go onto our face-book page you can see for yourself. It was a nice 23 inch cut-bow which jumped out of the water many times as the angler wrestled in. She was soooo excited and thrilled to land this guy. Many pictures were taken and everyone seemed to be wowed at the size!

Hoppers are still out all over the bank edges and a few October Caddis are hatching. October Caddis can be fun fishing as the flies are big and easy to see on the surface. The flies used today included hoppers, Fat Alberts, Parachute Adams, Lime Trudes and October Caddis (sized 12 to 16).

### **Fall Fishing Prognosis:**

The good weather is still holding, there are no wild fires in our area and the fishing is great. I am starting to think these fish still think its summer! And yes, the kokanee are almost finished spawning and the lower Mary is almost empty of them. They are still up in the top part of the Mary, but the numbers are down! We will be heading over to guide fishers on the upper Columbia River at the end of the week. You can expect a Fishing Report on our quest for the large Columbia rainbow trout soon!

Take care,

*Kelly*

## **St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the fall fishing opportunities on the upper Columbia River, where the big rainbows await...

### **Report #16 (September 11th, 2012)**

#### **Skookumchuck River Report: Conditions are perfect.**

Today we decided to take a drive into the backcountry for a walk and wade of the Skookumchuck River. The drive from Kimberley to our destination took about an hour and half.

A trip to the Skookumchuck starts a little earlier than normal due to the driving time, the hike back into the Skook and our preference to be on the water and fishing by 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. But the early morning start is definitely worth it as this fishing venue is special.

The weather today was typical for fall; very cool in the morning and warming up nicely by early to mid afternoon. The temperature reached a high of 65°F (18°C) on this trip. While it was dry today, we were prepared for rain and carried extra clothing just in case!

Upon our arrival we rigged up our 5 weight rods, put a dry fly on - making sure to crush the barbs – and added floatant to make it sit high on the water. We then began our walk back into the mountain valley.

On this walk one can fish the River along the way, but our goal was to go up the River for quite a way then turnaround and fish our way back to our parked trucks.

The water conditions on the Skookumchuck are now perfect for this time of year — very clear and low. In fact the water is so crystal clear that if you look closely you can sometimes spot a big bull trout

lurking on the bottom of the deep holes. That reminds me to mention to always remember to check the regulations before heading out as certain parts of our rivers are closed at various times due to bull trout spawning.

Once we had hiked far enough into the valley we turned towards the River and started casting dry flies. We focused on casting up along the bank edges and behind rocks in order to fool the wild Westslope Cutthroats into coming up and taking our bugs. As always the cast is not complete until you mend and get a good float even on these smaller streams. The fish will only take the fly if it is floating naturally. Again, there are always some fish that are not put off by a dragging fly, but more success comes to those who mend.

The fishing was quite good today and we saw some nice sized cutthroats show themselves. On the day the fishers landed about 15 fish each. The biggest cutthroat on the day was a nice 17 incher. It was chunky and very colourful with the bright orange slash down its jaw line. These cuts like to fight hard and run once hooked, so they provided plenty of fun!

In terms of the hatch we saw some Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis coming off today in modest numbers. We replied by tossing some caddis, Blue Winged Olives and H&L Variants (sized 14 to 18). We also used foam patterns later in the day including some Fat Alberts.

An added bonus of coming to the Skook this time of year is the wildlife viewing. Today on the drive we saw a bear run across the road in front of us, as well as many deer and elk grazing out in the fields. Yes it is looking like fall!

### **Fall Fishing on the Columbia River:**

The fall fishing window on the upper Columbia River will be opening in the next few weeks. We expect conditions to be excellent this year given all the water this season. Fishing up here is the fall really is exceptional as the trees change colour, the rivers are pretty well devoid of anglers and fish are gorging themselves in preparation for winter.

Come on up and give it a try.

*Kelly*

## **St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the fall fishing opportunities.

### **Report #15 (September 5th, 2012)**

#### **Elk River Report: The Blue Winged Olives are hatching like crazy!**

The early fall days have arrived here in the East Kootenays and with that comes a wide assortment of hatches. Since we enjoy the Elk River fall hatches we decided to head over to Fernie and fish it today. We floated one of the lower sections of the Elk down to the hamlet of Elko.

The weather started off as another beautiful fall day, but as things progressed the temperature dropped and a system moved in. The skies grew cloudy and the rain started to fall. As it turns out it was a good thing we decided to fish the Elk today as the change in the weather triggered some awesome hatches!

The water conditions are normal for this time of year - plenty and clear. The River is dropping as per usual, but there remains a lot of water for the fish. The temperature of the crystal water started off this morning at 56 degrees F. During the day it did go up a few degrees, but it was cool!

The day looked great for dry fly fishing, so we rigged the 5 weight rods with 5 or 6X tippets and 9 foot leaders. The fish were feeding aggressively as the River produced many hatches throughout the day. The result was a fabulous day of fishing as each angler caught and released 25 fish. The average size was 15 inches and we landed a few in the 18 inch range. The 18 inch cuts were nice and chunky with trademark bright red slash along the jaw line which is truly beautiful! It was a good day for seeing, and landing, big fish.

The hatches on the Elk today were plentiful. They consisted mainly of Blue Winged Olives that were hatching like crazy in the cooler weather. The fish seemed to know and gorged themselves. Obviously we responded with Blue Winged Olives (sizes 14 to 16) and foam patterns including Chernobyl Ants and Fat Albert's (sizes 10 to 12).

During lunch we noticed a bear walk out of the forest onto the water's edge across the River and sniff the air. Lucky for us it didn't seem interested in crossing to our side. We also saw some big horn sheep on the rock bluffs which was cool. Seeing the wildlife was a nice complement to the fun we had fishing.

### **East Kootenay Stream Update**

The fishing has been very good this September, so consider coming up as there are many fishing days remaining this month. Winter is coming way too fast, but there is still a lot of fishing time left.

### **The Upper Columbia River: big rainbows await**

We are now taking bookings for the Columbia River for later this month and into October which will provide some awesome big rainbow fishing! The Columbia is now running a little high at about 100,000 cubic feet per second, but it is coming down steadily. We expect it to be in prime condition a little later this month.

Hope to see you over there,



## **St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the fall fishing for cuts on the St.Mary or Elk, or big rainbows on the Upper Columbia.

### **Report #14 (August 31st, 2012)**

### **The St.Mary River is in its prime!**

On this final day of August we floated the Canyon Section of the St. Mary River from the put-in at

Wycliffe, down to the Mission. The weather has been quite beautiful all summer. There have been a few thunder showers, but they have mostly occurred in the evenings. So overall this summer has been fabulous. On this trip the temperature hit a comfortable 72°F (22°C) with very little wind to speak of. It was a clear blue summer day with a hint of fall in the air as the morning was crisp. It is smart to wear layers of clothing at this time of year as you never know just how cool it might get on the water in the early morning, with things warming up quite a bit as the day moves on.

The water level on the St.Mary continues to drop, but we still have more than enough to keep the fish happy. The rivers of south-eastern B.C. are in prime condition right now. All the snow we had last winter and the accompanying rain this spring is now paying big dividends in terms of fish habitat. The water levels are holding up well and providing excellent fishing opportunities in terms of floating or wading. The fish are in the runs feeding on dries greedily as they know fall is around the corner and winter will be here soon enough (yes, sad but true!).

The dry fly fishing on the St.Mary is so exciting as the fish come to the surface readily to feed making this the optimal way to fish! And that is exactly what we did today. We climbed into the boat, took our seats and the anglers began casting their dry lines into the emerald water. The St.Mary has many back channels, but as the water drops they begin to disappear, concentrating the available habitat and the fish. The St.Mary cutthroats love to hold and feed along logs and behind rocks and small pools along the bank edges. They lay in wait for a grasshopper, or any bug for that matter, to fall in the water so they can come up and turn it into dinner. So as you fish in these areas it is good to look at the water first before you start casting and check the flow. This helps one recognize which way to mend the fly in order to ensure it does not drag. The fly must float naturally down the run in order to fool these fish. That said, some of these cuts are so aggressive that they chase the fly no matter if it is dragging or not! But one ensures more strikes if one is a conscientious mender.

The anglers had a great day today as each of them landed about 25 cutthroats. The average size was a little bigger today, running about 14 to 15 inches with some girth to them.

The biggest fish caught was a nice 18 inch cutthroat which was very exciting for the group. The angler took some nice pictures of the big cut after a good fight between the two of them.

In terms of feed, hoppers are out in full force right now so if you like hopper fishing this is your time! They are all along the bank edges and in the fields. The fish love these big meals. If a hopper finds itself in the water — look out! In terms of the flies, the hoppers were most effective especially certain hopper patterns such as the Bullet Hopper and Dave's Hopper. Feel free to try one of your favourite hopper patterns, they likely will work as well. We also had some success with the Parachute Adams, Elk Hair Caddis, and various beetles or ant patterns (sizes 12 to 16). Foam is another way to go at this time of year as the cuts love foam, so try Chernobyl Ants or Fat Alberts as well (sizes 12-14).

As things are drying out in the high country we are now seeing many bucks starting to show themselves down along the water, so keep a keen eye.

### **The Upper Columbia River: fall fishing for large rainbows**

Well it is that time of year to start thinking about fishing the Upper Columbia River – the stretch downstream of Castlegar B.C. to the Border. We are now taking bookings for the [Columbia River](#) so come on up and catch some of these nice, large, rainbows. The Columbia River is an excellent place to end your season with these guys coming to your fly and hammering it!

Take care,

*Kelly*

## St.Mary Angler

Call me at 1-800-667-2311 to talk about the Upper Columbia and fishing for its big rainbows.

### **Report #13 (August 20th, 2012)**

#### **The Elk River has hit its summer groove!**

Today our destination was the lower section of the Elk River. This section is very beautiful and holds a lot of hungry cutthroat trout. This portion of the River winds away from the road which makes it even better.

The weather has been quite good for us fishers lately and today was no exception. The temperature did not go up that high, but it was very comfortable on the River. It reached a high of 72°F (22°C) and we saw a couple of rain drops in the afternoon, but not enough to cause us any concern.

The water conditions on the Elk are very good for this time of year. The levels are holding up well which we imagine makes the wild Westslope Cutthroat very happy. The pools and runs are formed nicely and they are holding a lot of fish!

As always we pull up to the River, put the boats in the water and gather the equipment to string the rods.

We like to dry fly fish on the Elk so on goes the dry line with a shortened 9 foot 4X leader as the fishers started off with big bugs. A 4 or 5 weight rod is a good choice for this River as well.

After getting all their paraphernalia in order the fishers piled into the boat and made a few false casts. Once the guide had positioned them so they could cast their bugs behind a favorable rock, or into a nice run, the fishing day was underway. Cutthroats like the bug to float naturally down the stream with absolutely no drag, so the fishers would cast and then mend immediately. When they did not mend they would get a helpful reminder from their guide... Some fishers say that after a day on the River they can hear the guide saying “mend” in their dreams... in those cases lets hope that helps them out the next time they are out on the river!

The Elk can be moody this year, but today it fished very well. Only a few fish were caught in the morning, but by the afternoon it was “on fire!”. On the day the anglers landed 25 cutthroat each and a few were in the 16 inch range! The fish this year tend to be on the chunky side and all are healthy looking. Some of the fish that were released had visible scars on their sides, probably from a bull trout attacking them when they were younger. The biggest fish caught on this trip was a nice 17 inch cutthroat which put up a good fight. They do like to pull hard on your 4 weight rod!

The dominant bugs included grasshoppers which are out in the fields and all along the bank edges now. We also saw some small black midges coming off the water surface. The flies that were working on the Elk River today were the Parachute Adams, H and L Variants, Black Ant patterns, tan Caddis and of course foam patterns such as Chernobyl Ants and Fat Alberts. The sizes ranged from small (18) up to the big foam patterns (sized 10).

We saw many deer on the drive to the Elk River, as well as some during the float. Eagles and ospreys were also frequent on the River flying above scouting out their next meal.

The weather has been beautiful, with no wild fires this year to go along with awesome fishing. Feel free to check us out on our St.Mary Angler face-book page.

Take care,

Kelly

## St.Mary Angler

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a float.

### **Report #12 (August 12th, 2012)**

#### **St. Mary River Report: the fishing is on!**

Today we floated the Canyon Section of the St.Mary River which stretches from Wycliffe down to the Mission take-out. The view on this float is spectacular, but then so is the whole River on a summer day like today. Each section of the Mary has different qualities, but all are equally beautiful... and for the fishing, well “it is on!”

We are currently in a weather system that is giving the East Kootenays beautiful sunny weather every day. The temperature reached 82°F (28°C) today so not too hot, just the perfect amount of heat when a little breeze is thrown in!

The Mary is at its optimal water level for this time of year — just perfect for the fish. It is not too low like in dry years which can stress the fish somewhat. The water is very clear and the runs and pools are perfectly formed.

We rigged up our fly gear using 4 and 5 weight rods, 9 foot leaders and the guides choice of flies for the St.Mary. From the start we noticed that the stoneflies were coming off and their shucks were all over the rocks. We also could see the hoppers were all over the grass along the banks of the River. Our M.O. was to cast our dry lines towards the bank edges, behind rocks and any other significant structure in the River. On occasion we would pull over and walk the bank edges to cast to feeding fish. There is something very special in watching a cutthroat chase your fly and gobble it up. In order to hook it one must be patient enough not pull the fly away from their grasp before they get a chance to clamp down and run with it!

Today the fishing was on! We kept changing the flies, but it did not really seem to matter as the fish were aggressive and hungry for all of them. As long as the fisher got a good drift on the fly for some distance, the cuts would track it and then eat it with gusto. The anglers easily landed 25 fish each and the average fish was 13 - 14 inches in length. They also caught a few in the 17 inch range and one pretty nice 18 inch “cut-bow” was landed. The guide knew right of way it was a cut-bow because it came flying out of the water jumping and racing off! The angler had a nice fight with the fish and slowly brought it to the side of the boat — picture time! It was a very healthy and chunky fish, a beauty for the St.Mary!

In terms of the hatches we saw a lot of grasshoppers on the bank edges and stone flies continuing their hatch up the River. The flies used today included Fat Alberts, Dave’s Hoppers, Stone Flies, orange and yellow Stimulators, Parachute Adams, black and tan Caddis and Chernobyl Ants. The sizes used ranged from big flies such as the 10’s to small flies sized 16.

We saw a lot bird life on the River today which can be exciting when you see and hear an eagle soar above you looking for food on the water!

Fishing is really rocking right now as the rivers are in perfect shape and the fish are really active. As a bonus the weather trend looks like it is going to hold for sometime.

Come on up and experience some of the best dry fly fishing around!

Take care,

Kelly

## St.Mary Angler

September is looking good and with the water levels holding the fly-fishing is going to be amazing this fall. Come and see for yourself!

### **Report #11 (August 6th, 2012)**

#### **Bull River Report: A Good Choice Amongst Many!**

Another beautiful day and another choice of which scenic river to go and fish. Today's choice was the majestic Bull River. Just to show you how odd this season has been, the Bull River was the first river to come into shape this year, before the St. Mary and the Elk, crazy stuff!

Recently we have had a high pressure zone sitting over southeastern B.C., so the weather has been quite beautiful with temperatures reaching 86°F (30°C) today. It feels cooler up on the Bull due to its elevation and canyon setting, which was welcome. We drove up to a new section of the Bull and put in about 3 miles higher than we usually do.

The water is at a perfect level and flow now with all the runs formed up and the pockets full of cutthroats feeding on bugs. The section we ran today took us through a canyon which provided some spectacular scenery to start the trip.

As for the fishing, it was practically a fish with every cast. The cutthroats are hungry and they are taking advantage of the summer conditions. Summers are short in the heart of the Rockies. Fortunately they are long enough for anglers to get into them and fly fish for these beautiful Wild Westslope Cutthroats. We dry fly fished all day; casting behind rocks, along logs and in the runs to find these wonderful fish!

The fishing was very good today with each client losing count of the number caught. Lets just us say each angler caught 20 cutthroat with the average size around 13 inches. We did catch and release quite a few in the 15 inch range, which is a really nice size for the Bull River.

The 15 inch cutthroats looked very healthy and fit and they put up a really good fight. When these cutthroats hook up they sometimes chase the bug right out of the water and try to drown it, or they just grab on and vank the flv below the surface. Either way it is a blast to see them torndedo themselves up

from the depths!

There was not much of a hatch on the water today as we only saw some small midges coming off. The effective flies on the day included: Royal Wulff's H&L Variants, green or black Caddis, yellow or orange Stimulators, big Chernobyl Ants and Fat Alberts (Sizes 10 to 14).

Of course being on the Bull River means we are in Bear Country. In the summer they usually bed down out of the heat during the day and only head down to the water in the mornings and evenings. So we rarely see them until fall starts to approach and did not see them today, but we were on the lookout. We did see a lot of bird life and deer feeding out in the fields as we floated downstream.

### **Fall Fishing:**

September is shaping up to be a great month as last winters big snowpack will ensure water levels remain optimal late into the fall. So give some thought to coming up after the busy summer time to enjoy the fall colors and get into some great dry fly fishing.

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take care,

*Kelly*

## **St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk to us about available days in August and September.

### **Report #10 (July 28, 2012)**

#### **St.Mary River Report: River conditions are great and the cutthroats are very eager and active!**

Today we floated the top section of the St. Mary River from the Lake down to the Pump-house. The St.Mary looks just spectacular now! Many side channels and pools have formed up and there is a lot of water to fish in this section of the River.

The weather has been beautiful for some time now, truly summer conditions, and the skies are finally the "ocean blue" color we expect of July. The temperature today reached a high of 79°F (26°C) with very little wind to speak of.

The Mary has been quite high to start this season. It has now dropped quite a bit and is starting to form runs and nice pools were the fish can stack up and feed. Once the rain finally stopped, it was like someone pulled the plug on the River and it has responded by settling into a summer flow.

Before we launched the Moravia, we already had our 4 weight fly-rods rigged up with the Guide's choice of dry fly on a 9 foot leader. We then floated the River directly to a few predetermined stretches, jumped out of the boat and fished the runs. Many channels are walkable and fishable right back up so it was great to get out of the boat and cast the line as soon as we could.

Fishing the River on this day was fabulous! It was like the cutthroats all woke up at the same time. On

almost every drift a cutthroat either took the fly, or came and looked it over. They are now stacked up along bank walls, or resting behind some rocks or structure. You just have to get a good drift on your fly, avoiding any drag at all, and the fish will come and eat your bug!

During this float, the fishers caught and released 25 cutthroat each with the average size being 13-14 inches. They also had bull trout chasing their cutthroats as they were trying to land them and even managed to hooked up and land one bull. The biggest fish caught was a nice 17 inch cutthroat which gave them a good fight. These fish seemed to be hungry and ready to eat anything that floated appropriately into their feeding zone.

The hatch on the St.Mary consisted mostly of stoneflies as they are hatching and working their way upstream. Some small Yellow Salleys were also hatching. The most effective flies included the Lime Trudes, Royal Wulffs, H&L Variants, Fat Alberts and Stone Patterns including yellow and orange stimulators (Sizes 12-14).

During the trip we saw many eagles along the River, as well as a few deer coming down for a long cool drink.

### **River Round-up:**

The Rivers are fishing great, so come on up!

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take care,

*Kelly*

## **St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk river conditions and available days.

### **Report #9 (July 21, 2012)**

#### **Bull River Report: The cutthroats are aggressive and plentiful!**

Today we decided to take a little trek to fish the Bull River located right in the heart of the Rockies. The Bull is a high mountain stream with beautiful views of the peaks and surroundings. It has fabulous scenery to go along with great fishing!

The weather today was spectacular with bright blue skies and temperatures reaching 77°F (25°C). We experienced light winds which was nice after the heavy winds we had the night before. We have had some crazy weather here in the Kootanies so far in 2012.

Speaking of the conditions on the Bull, it also is still higher than normal, but slowly coming down. We have continued to get a lot of rain these past few weeks to go along with all that precipitation this spring. That said, the Bull River is clear down to about six feet and is starting to form some nice pools and runs. If you are going to walk and wade this stream it is still higher than normal so please be very careful.

With the Bull River looking so good we decided to dry fly fish using 9 foot leaders and big bugs. We expected the fish to be hungry and willing to jump out of the water for anything, so we were excited to get going.

Once in the boat we started to cast along the bank edges and could see immediately that the fish were aggressive. The Bull River fish are smaller than those on the Elk and St.Mary, but there are many of them and they like to pull. On the day each angler caught and released about 15 trout. The average size caught was in the 12 to 13 inch range.

The biggest fish caught was a nice 15 inch cutthroat with a bright red slash on its jaw and looked very healthy and strong. They do like to fight and pull hard these cuts. It is such a joy to land these wild Westslope Cutthroats and one can see why anglers come from all over the world to pursue them in the summer!

In terms of the insect activity, we only saw a small hatch of Yellow Sallies during the float. The flies that were working well included; Royal Wulffs, H and L Variants, Lime Trudes and Fat Alberts - all in the 12 to 14 size range.

Today we saw a few eagles flying high above and a few deer grazing in the very lush grass along the Bull. All this rain has really made the landscape green year!

### **River Round-up:**

The St.Mary and Elk rivers are finally coming down and if there is any good news with this late start to the season, it is how good September is going to be this year. In addition to the great summer water conditions, we expect September and early October to be very productive. Come on out and fish this fall.

Hope to see you on the water soon.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

FYI, September is starting to book up, so give us a call soon.

### **Report #8 (July 11, 2012)**

#### **St. Mary River Report: The cutthroats are stacked up in the back channels!**

Well, here we go again with another season of fly fishing on the rivers of South-eastern B.C. As it turns out the freshet lasted longer than we thought it would, so we are off the mark a little later than predicted. We had a crazy amount of snow in the high country and lots of rain this spring, but finally the rivers have dropped enough to fish. Today we decided to float the St. Mary River from the Lake down to the Wycliffe take out.

The weather was absolutely beautiful with temperatures reaching close to 85°F (30°C). Bring on the heat!

The water conditions are still running high, but are dropping about a foot each day. All the back channels are running clear. The fish love to stack up in them to hide from the fast moving water out in the main channel, and we know it.

We stayed true to the dry fly today, but no doubt nymphing and throwing streamers would have produced as well. You must remember this River is one barbless fly only. It is also a “catch and release only” fishery. Please check the regulations before you go fishing on any streams in B.C. to ensure you are in full compliance.

Our approach was to cruise down the River in our comfortable Moravia drift boats, casting into the slow pockets of water along the bank edges. This approach pulled some nice fish up to look at, and take the fly. We would also pull over to the small side channels where we hopped out and walked the bank edges. Each of the fishers caught and released 10 to 15 cutthroats on dries, it was a lot of fun! These wild Westslope Cutthroats were ‘early season aggressive’ and hungry. All the fishers needed to do was ensure a nice drift of the fly for a few seconds down a run, then wait for the fish to hammer the bug!

The average size cutthroat caught and released today was in the range of 13 to 14 inches. We hooked up a nice 15 incher that gave the angler a good fight. The cutthroats looked very healthy and strong and their colors were brilliant.

The Stonefly hatch is in the process of working its way up the St.Mary River. We noticed many stones on the rocks or landing on the surface during the float. We also saw some Yellow Sallys coming off during the day. Stonefly patterns, Fat Alberts, Lime Trudes and Royal Wulff (sizes 12-14) were working at different times. At this time of year we often find we have to switch it up all the time to find the pattern that is working in the different stretches of the River.

On the St. Mary today we saw some deer that came down for a drink. We also saw a lot of osprey and eagle action as they were flying about hunting, feeding and tending their chicks. It should be fun to watch the progress of the young ones in the coming weeks.

One of the upsides of the high water this spring will be lots of water throughout the season. We expect things to be fishing absolutely terrific summer through fall. So if you can't make it out during the summer, keep September/early October in mind as it is a great time to fish the rivers of South-eastern B.C. In September we see some great hatches come off, making it particularly fun for those who like to ‘match the hatch’. Blue Winged Olives and Mahogany Duns hatch at this time and provide lots of fun.

So if you are tied up this summer, come see us in the fall!

Hope to see you on the water this season.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to find out about the river conditions and available days at our new lodge.

## **Report #7 (July 5, 2012)**

### **Premier Lake: it's not the number, but the size that counts!**

Well the rivers are still high, although they are coming down steadily. We expect to be fishing on the St. Mary within a week, but today we decided to lake fish one more time, and we headed out to Premier.

We departed later in the day and arrived at Premier Lake around 3:30 in the afternoon. This allowed us to be in and warmed up in time for the evening hatch. The weather was absolutely beautiful today with the temperature reaching 75°F (24°C). There was not a cloud in the sky. A light breeze greeted us and blew throughout the afternoon into the evening. Definitely a sun screen, hat and sunglasses kind of day!

The water on Premier Lake is still high along the bank edges, but slowly dropping. Things are a little off again this year as it feels more like the beginning of June and not July. The water is not completely clear yet. That said, this recent warm weather is seeing a lot of people camping and recreating on and around the Lake so summer is finally here!

We decided to run a dry line with 18 foot leader and strike indicator. Our approach was to flycast over the drop off ledges on the Lake. This approach tends to work quite well, but if it does not we know we can always drag a wet line along the drop off ledges and use big pulling patterns such as leeches, damsels, or woolly buggers to do pretty well.

We fished from 4:00 p.m. till around 9:00 p.m. The outing started off quite slow as we managed to land only a couple small guys. The sun was out and it was quite hot, but once the sun went behind a few clouds in late afternoon, the fish seemed to get a lot more active. The rainbows started to come to the surface and feed. On this trip the two of us caught and released 10 nice rainbows. The best fishing right now is early mornings, or late afternoons into evenings, so a late start can provide dividends.

The night was made when my partner hooked up on a huge rainbow for Premier Lake. The two of us were both casting in the same area and she decided to stop bringing in the fly and let it hang for a few moments. She then went to give it a pull back and this rainbow grabbed on to the fly. It felt bigger than any other fish we had caught this particular night.

She lifted the rod and the fish bolted, running the fly line all the way into the backing. From the distance we could see the fish roll close to the surface and we both looked at each other and said, “wow that is a big fish!”. She slowly brought the fish to the boat, landed it and we took a great photo. The rainbow was a nice 24 incher — it looked very healthy and gave us a great fight!

In terms of hatches, the evening produced a hatch of black chironomids, size 16, with a red head. We also saw a few beetles on the surface. The flies used on the day included chironomids (black and red), leeches and damsel patterns. They all were tied onto the dry line with long leaders. The sizes of flies ranged from 14's down to 16's.

As usual, we could hear the cry of the loons off in the distance of the Lake. We also saw a kit of coyote pups running across the road. They darted across right in front of our vehicle, stopped and turned around to take a look at us. They looked so cuddly, I can now understand how someone could (erroneously) think they might make a good pet!

### **Rivers Report:**

The rivers are dropping fast. The Elk River has dropped quite a bit and is now clearing. The St. Mary River is also dropping and clearing up above “The Clay Bank”. As per usual this time of year it is being undercut and letting loose so the bottom part of the Mary is still quite murky. Another few hot days will

help reduce the water levels and give us the clarity we are looking for.

Take care,



## St.Mary Angler

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to check for available days at the lodge, on the rivers, or chat about the latest conditions.

### **Report #6 (June 17, 2012)**

#### **An early season float on the St.Mary River reveals things are starting to shape up.**

When this time of year comes along it is always a great feeling to know the rivers of the East Kootenays are open to fishing. They are closed from May 1st till June 15th for spawning and are really not accessible anyways because of the spring run-off. The Columbia and the Kootenay rivers are open all year round, but you are always advised to check the regulations each spring as some things change every year!

Today we decided to do our annual preseason reconnaissance float down the St. Mary River to see how things are shaping up. Because the River is still running high, we were able to float multiple sections in one go. Today we floated from the Pump-house put-in all the way down to the Kootenay River takeout at historic Fort-Steele.

The weather was actually quite good for us today even though it seemed like the storms were rolling all around us. While we heard and saw rainfall in the distance, we stayed dry. The temperature was holding around 65°F (18°C), with the sun poking through the clouds occasionally. Over all it was a very pleasant day.

The water conditions are normal for this time of year. The run-off is still coming pretty good, but past the peak flow. The River was not fishable today because of its lack of clarity and big volume. But we managed to check out the River to see if there were any changes from the year before.

We had 5 boats on the water and everyone checked out different channels and areas of the River where the water had flowed while at its peak. The River has really changed a lot in a few spots with many new channels and rock formations which will hold fish as the waters recede.

While our goal was more of a look and see, versus a fishing trip, we could not resist throwing some big stone fly patterns very close to the bank edges, but had no success. The fish are still moving up to their summer areas and it was too hard for them to see the bugs on the surface. We also tried to nymph as well, but conditions are not yet suitable. We did see signs of stone flies coming off as we floated on the lower section of the River, so the bugs are active.

We did have a very nice float down to one of the lunch spots and stopped. We lit a good sized fire and cooked sausages and hung out for over an hour enjoying the scenery and the eagles.

Since the St.Mary is dropping steadily now, we expect it to be in fishable in a week or two. So stay

tuned as the season is about to start!

Take care,



## St.Mary Angler

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to get the latest conditions or check for available days.

### **Report #5 (June 3, 2012)**

#### **When the spring skies are favorable, Premier Lake is the place to be!**

The morning was quite nice with high clouds and the sun poking through, so we were off to Premier Lake. The weatherman has been calling for a record amount of rain later this week, so we wanted to get out while it was relatively nice. The day was mostly overcast with very little wind. You need a little wind on the lake to cause some disturbance on the surface so fish are not spooked by the fly line.

The water conditions are normal for this time of year. The snow pack is melting gradually and the run-off has been moving through since the beginning of May. However, with the rain coming later this week, the streams and rivers will swell and grow wild once again. All the low elevation snow is now gone and only the snow up high remains, but it is moving down quickly.

Today we started out by first rigging up the fly rods at the boat launch then making sure everything was ready to go and loaded into the boat. Once on the water, we took our time observing the conditions before commencing to fish. More specifically, we cruised through the back bays looking for feeding fish, or fish just cruising in the shallows.

Premier is not the type of Lake where you go and park along a drop-off ledge and fish for three hours. On Premier you have to move around to be successful. After a little while we saw a few fish cruising along a drop-off ledge so decided it was time to stop the boat. With a little wind to our backs, we anchored both ends of the boat and casted our chironomid rigs towards the drop-off ledge.

Depending on how deep the water is, your leader can be anywhere from 8 to 20 feet long. So this is where your built leader comes in very handy. If you build it long enough you can move your strike indicator up or down depending on how deep you are. Once you figure out the depth you want the chironomid to hang in the water column, you then place a b-b shot a foot above your artificial chironomid and begin to cast. This technique can be very good when the hatch comes off so you must be ready! Try not to daydream, or get distracted out there, as it often when you look away for a second that the indicator goes down and you miss the strike!

We cruised around in the morning from one bay to another and caught a few fish. By mid afternoon we found a bay with good activity and did well there. The two of us caught and released over a dozen fish each. The rainbows were very healthy and strong fighters who liked to jump clear out of the water. The bulk of the rainbows were between 14 and 17 inches long... Premier Lake "cookie cutters" as we like to refer to them!

The biggest fish caught today was a nice 18 inch rainbow! It ran us almost into our backing and put up a

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nice fight. This guy almost jumped into the boat (really) and it was swimming back towards us quickly after it made its initial big run! When a nice sized fish runs towards the boat you must strip the line as fast as you can because if you reel, you might not keep up and risk losing the fish. That is my voice of experience talking here!

The only hatch coming off today was the black chironomids in the afternoon, size 14-16. The most effective flies we used included the Black Chironomid, the Red-Diachi Chironomid and the Snow-cone Chironomid. We also used a Black Leech, Doc-Spratly and Hare's Ears, sized 12-16.

Premier Lake has a high population of bird life ranging from eagles to a couple of pairs of loons on the Lake. You know where the fish are if you see the loons in the bays, however, they also can be a problem as they spook fish as well!

### **Regional Runoff Report:**

While the lakes are all fishing well at this time, the run-off on the rivers is now near its peak. It looks like all the rivers will clear up and be fishing early this year. Except for the Columbia and Kootenay rivers, all the small streams and rivers in our region are closed due to the spring run-off and spawning protection till June 15th. After that everything opens for the summer season.

If you are interested in coming up early for cutthroat fishing on the St. Mary River give us a call because it can be amazing just as the rivers open after June 15th. It has been a few years since we could get out in June and fish because the rivers have been unusually high. But this year is proving to be different so give us a call 1-800-667-2311 to book a trip.

I hope to see on the water this summer.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to talk conditions, or to book a stay at our Angler's Guest House.

### **Report #4 (May 16, 2012)**

#### **Premier Lake has turned over and is ready to go!**

Today we fished Premier Lake in the East Kootenays. Premier is nestled up in the Rockies and is one of the most scenic lakes in this part of British Columbia. The views from the water of the Rockies is pure eye candy. Not to mention the fishing which can be outstanding at this time of year!

This time of year the weather can be very unpredictable, but this week it has been gorgeous. We have seen clear skies with highs of 77°F (25°C). We always dress in layers at this time of year as it is always cool in the morning. As the morning turns into the afternoon a breeze can also pick up. So it is wise to have all your gear packed just in case it rains, or gets really windy and cold. In the Rockies in the spring you just never know what Mother Nature will throw your way!

Premier Lake has finished its spring turnover. The runoff of the snowpack is causing the lake level to

rise a bit now, but this is normal for this time of year. It looks like the run-off started about 1 to 2 weeks early this year, which is great for us eager fishers.

Today we fished chironomid rigs with our leaders built between 10 and 20 feet, a strike indicator, a b-b shot and a chironomid fly on the line. We looked around the Lake for a good drop off ledge, anchored up our boat and casted with the wind at our backs. We knew the spawning fish should be almost done and we were looking to catch a nice clean rainbow which had moved into the shallows to feed. We always look for cruising or feeding fish before we start casting. It is always good to sit in the boat, have a coffee, and take your time to observe your surroundings before you start casting.

Premier Lake fished very well today. We could see the trout cruising in the shallows and feeding on the chironomid hatch. Each of the anglers caught and released 10 fish. Things started slow in the morning and then picked up in the afternoon. All these fish were in the 14 to 17 inch window. The fish were all very healthy looking and fought well. The biggest rainbow landed was a nice 18 incher. It had the beautiful markings of a healthy clean rainbow!

We observed a hatch of small black and grey chironomids sizes 14-16 coming off. We are now anticipating the annual black flying ant hatch which usually happens very soon. When this hatch of big ants comes the fish will gorge themselves on them for a couple of days and this is an excellent time to be out on the water.

The most effective flies on the day were the Black Chironomid, the Red Diachi Chironomid, Doc Spratleys, Wooley Buggers and Black Leeches. There are so many different types of chironomids in the water column that it is always good to change your fly often to find out which one is working the best on the day.

The alpine lakes of our region are all fishing quite well now as the chironomid hatches are occurring every day on these lakes.

I hope you can get out on the water soon.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 for available days, or to book a stay at our Angler's Guest House.

### **Report #3 (May 14, 2012)**

#### **The Upper Columbia River is in prime form!**

Today we were back over in the West Kootenay Region of Southern B.C. to fish the upper Columbia River. The section of the Big River we decided to fish was between Trail and Castlegar B.C. It is a 10 plus mile stretch of big, brawling, free flowing river, with many nice runs and big expansive back eddies, lots of fun!

The morning started early at the Sunshine Restaurant in Rossland B.C. We had a great (mostly healthy)

breakfast and a much appreciated injection of coffee to begin the day. The weather was absolutely beautiful on this May 14th. The sky was clear and by mid afternoon the temperature reached highs of 86°F (30°C). It sure felt like summer today! Good thing we took along the sun tan lotion and the polarized sunglasses as they sure came in handy.

The water flow of the Columbia was running at about 88,000 Cubic Feet Per Second, which is normal for this time of year. The clarity of the river water was very good. There was some debris in the water, but not enough to cause any problems. That said, it is always a good idea to keep an eye out for logs and other floating debris on the surface.

We started out by motoring up-river to a favourite fishing site and then shutting down the motor. We then rowed along the bank edges and into the big back eddies allowing the fishers the opportunity to get good casts into the runs. You cannot get too close to these rainbows as they spook easily. On the Columbia an angler needs to be able to cast comfortably up to 60 feet into the runs, so the line can get out and down to where the fish are. Our choice of technique on this trip was nymphing and throwing streamers. When we did see some action on the surface we took the opportunity to grab the dry fly rods and threw flies directly to the feeding rainbows!

The two anglers landed 18 fish, but missed many others. These rainbows are big fighters and do not give up easily. The rainbows also like to jump out of the water and if you do not have the tension correct they will pop the hook out at any given moment!

The anglers were very happy with the rainbows and how they pulled. They commented on how great the fight was and said it reminded them of catching steelhead. The biggest fish caught on the day was a nice fat 22 inch rainbow which took the fly fisher into his backing! It had beautiful colors and was very healthy. Judging from the look of the fish we handled, spawning is mostly complete now.

In terms of the hatches, small midges were coming off during the day and later in the afternoon. In the early evening black caddis sized 16 to 18 came off as well. The flies that were most effective during the day included the Black Caddis Emerger patterns (sizes 16 to 18), Kelly's Super Streamer and Hares Ears Nymph (sizes 10 to 12).

We saw a lot of bird life throughout the day and spotted the river otter again patrolling one of her back eddies.

### **East Kootenay Rivers Update:**

The St.Mary and Elk rivers are in full runoff mode now. We expect them to peak in the next few days. This is great news as we expect the rivers to be in good shape and available to fish early this year! Summer River fishing is booking up now, so give us a call about available days and come and fish some of the best dry fly fishing around!

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss conditions, available days, or to book a stay at our Angler's Guest House.

## Report #2 (May 6, 2012)

### No wonder they call it Horseshoe Lake!

Today we fished a small lake called Horseshoe, located in the East Kootenay region of southern British Columbia. There are many small lakes in our region which provide a lot of excellent fishing opportunities at this time of year.

The weather is 'spring like' now, which is code for anything can happen; be it rain, snow, wind and/or sun! Today was actually beautiful with temperatures reaching 65°F (18°C). There were only a few high clouds and a light breeze blowing occasionally across the water. A nice day to head out on the water.

A lot of the lakes in our area have turned over already, including Horseshoe. So the water was clear and at normal elevation today as one of first lakes to ice off. The spring runoff does not seem to effect Horseshoe that much.

Today we fished chironomids. This meant we used a dry line with leaders and tippet running anywhere from 10 to 20 feet. Most anglers build their own leaders where they include an indicator, a length of leader (depending on where you are on the lake), a piece of b-b shot and then the chironomid of choice.

Boat positioning is important on the lake as you want the wind to be at your back, while you face an underwater drop off ledge. You then need to anchor up so you remain stationary, then cast your line towards and over the drop off ledge. Let the line sink for a few seconds and then retrieve. You must be patient and retrieve the fly all the way back to the boat before you cast again. The fish tend to like to follow it all the way back sometimes, so you have to accommodate this behavior. When the indicator bobs down, you lift gently and 'voila' ... hook the fish! This method is very effective for spring chironomid fishing.

On this trip we also tried callibaetis nymphs with no indicator. In addition, we pulled leeches with a wet line, stripping it back slowly towards the boat. This leech technique can be very effective.

We had good luck on Horseshoe Lake today as the two anglers caught and released over 25 rainbows! We were fortunate using the chironomids as they were hatching during certain times of the day. The biggest fish was a nice 18 inch rainbow – very healthy looking with a beautiful set of markings.

In terms of the most effective flies, the size 16-18 Black Chironomids, the Red Daichi and Tan Callibaetis produced best. The size 8-10 leeches and Woolly Buggers also caught some fish.

The fishing on the lakes is just starting to get hot now. So here we go again, the start of another season of lake and stream fishing in the beautiful East Kootenays.

Hope you get a chance to come and enjoy the fishing in our outdoor playground this summer.

Take care,



**St.Mary Angler**

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 for available days.

## Report #1 (May 3, 2012)

### Upper Columbia River Report: the water is clear and big rainbows are biting!

Today we fished the section of the Mighty Columbia River out of the Rossland/Trail area of southeastern B.C. This run of the Columbia is located just above the Canada/US border upstream of Lake Roosevelt. We put in at the Robson boat launch and used our jet boat to power down to some prime water located upstream of Genelle, B.C.

The weather at this time of year is often a mixed bag. Today we had everything from rain, sunshine and wind during the trip. So it is very important to dress appropriately in layers of clothing. It is easy to cool down when out on the water, so dressing to keep warm and dry is a must.

A few days ago this section of the Upper Columbia was coloring up as the water levels were rising through the upstream dams on the Columbia and Kootenay rivers. We were seeing a lot of logs and debris floating in the main channel. So we gave the River a few days to clear up and were rewarded today with a very clear and fishable Columbia.

At this time of year, we like to focus our fishing effort on nymphing and/or throwing streamers across the big eddies and along the bank edges. We have all the rods strung up and ready to go in advance. So if you want to nymph, throw streamers, or toss a dry fly all you have to do is pick up the appropriate rod! We prefer to use 10 foot 6 weight fly rods which are well suited for this big water. We also have 12 foot 6/7 weight Spey rods ready to put together should an angler wish to Spey cast on specific runs.

The fishing was very good today. The two anglers in the boat caught and released 9 fish each, most in the 17 to 19 inch class. There were some really nice fish in this group. Both anglers also caught big rainbows in the 20 to 21 inch slot which jumped like crazy. In the robust water of the Columbia, when the fish get themselves out of the eddy and into the current, they can take you into your backing in seconds! Once the fish were netted, and the requisite pictures were taken, the rainbows were quickly released back into the green depths of the Columbia.

Many of the rainbows that lay their eggs up the tributary streams are now nearing the end of the spawn. The ones that build their redds in the mainstem of the Columbia are now pretty well finished spawning and look quite healthy. They have beautiful spots and big tails so they can fight the current of this big river.

The only hatches observed coming off during this trip were some very small size 18 Midges and Callebatis May Flies. The artificial flies that were particularly good on this day included; Kelly's Super Streamer, Hare's Ear Soft Hackle (which we would swing) and some size 6 to 8 stone patterns.

On the River today we saw a group of river otters swimming in the big back eddies, which was really cool. We also saw a number of eagles, ravens and Canada Geese. At one point we pulled in to do a little casting from the bank and spooked a large group wild turkeys. So neat!

Fishing is great on the Columbia River all of May to June 15th and we are now tying into some sizable rainbows. As summer approaches on the Columbia the caddis hatches start to come off and dry fly fishing is spectacular!

Hope to see you on the water soon,

*Kellu*



## St.Mary Angler

Call us at 1-800-667-2311 for available days, to book a trip or find out the latest fishing conditions.