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## **St. Mary Angler Guide Service: a review of the 2018 fishing season.**

### **Overview of the Conditions.**

Last winter brought us a snowpack that was again way more than usual. On May 1st the snowpack was 168% of 'normal' across B.C., a continuation of what we saw in 2017. As of May 1st the snowpack in the East Kootenay region, which includes the St. Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck rivers, was at 150%. Over in the West Kootenays, where we fish the upper Columbia River, it was 180% of the long term average... so we got a lot of snow last winter!

Then the quick melt arrived. From May 1st to the 15<sup>th</sup> we saw extreme temperatures of 5° to 10°C above normal across most of the British Columbia. These high temperatures caused dramatic snow melt. As a result the snow largely disappeared from the low elevation areas. The mid-elevation areas saw the melting of approximately 30-60% of its snow pack, and up top we lost 10-30%... all in the two weeks...wow.

On May 9-10 we saw heavy rainfall that led to some significant flooding along the Kettle River which is about 3 hours drive west of where we fish. By the end of May the dramatic snowmelt associated with the hot weather had resulted in many areas transitioning from well above normal snow pack to well below over the course of a few

weeks. By early June many regions of B.C. were experiencing snow conditions that were 2-3 weeks below normal!

We then experienced lower than average rainfall during the rest of the spring and through the summer in the East Kootenays. In the fall we saw a regular amount of precipitation. So even with the very high winter snow pack we started fishing the St.Mary and Elk rivers in early July ... right on schedule.

In terms of air temperature in the East Kootenays, it was consistently warmer than usual from May thru August. September saw cooler than normal temperatures, likely a result of the smoke we experienced from wildfires. All our rivers in the East Kootenays saw good flows throughout the season providing excellent fishing conditions.

Over on the upper Columbia River in the West Kootenays the air temperature was also warmer from May through August. As was the case in the East Kootenays, things got cooler in September from the smoke. After the month of April, rainfall was below usual from May thru October. These hot and dry conditions did not create any water temperature problems in the spring and fall when we fish for the big rainbows. As the Columbia is a "tailwater fishery", located downstream of a large lake, high water does not create any problems for us. The upper Columbia River is a robust and resilient piece of water and we experienced excellent fishing conditions throughout the 2018 season in both the spring and fall.

The fishing season on the upper Columbia started on schedule in the first week of April. We started the summer fishing season for wild Westslope Cutthroat on the St.Mary River in early July and we were on the Elk a couple of days later. We got to the Skookumchuck and Bull by mid-July. The season lasted almost into October on the St.Mary and Elk rivers. We fished the upper Columbia River with our fly and spey rods into the late October.

2018 was a record year in B.C. in terms of the amount of land burned by wildfires, coming in at over 1.3 million hectares. While the largest fires were located in central B.C., outside of our region, we did have a couple of note in our area come August. The smoke did become a challenge at times, but were able to continue to fish the St.Mary and Elk rivers.

### **East Kootenay Temperature and Rainfall (Station ‘Cranbrook A’, B.C.):**

Month	May	June	July	August	September	October
Temperature in 2018	22 °C (72°F)	22°C (72°F)	29°C (84.2°F)	28°C (82.4°F)	18°C (64.4°F)	11°C (51.8°F)
Average Daily Max. Temperature (1981-2010)	17.9°C (64°F)	21.6°C (71°F)	26.2°C (79°F)	26.0°C (79°F)	19.9°C (68°F)	11.7°C (53°F)
Rainfall in 2018	25 mm (.98 in.)	60 mm (2.36 in.)	21 mm (.83 in.)	8 mm (.32 in.)	41 mm (1.61 in.)	36 mm (1.42 in.)
Average Monthly Rainfall (1981-2010)	46.1 mm (1.8 in.)	62.2 mm (2.45 in.)	38.3 mm (1.5 in.)	28 mm (1.1 in.)	31.3 mm (1.23 in.)	20.8 mm (.82 in.)

### **Columbia River Temperature and Rainfall (Station Castlegar, B.C.):**

Month	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Temperature in 2018 (Average Daily Max.)	14°C (57°F)	26°C (79°F)	25°C (77°F)	32°C (89.6°F)	30°C (86°F)	21°C (69.8°F)	13°C (55.4°F)
Average Daily Max. Temperature (1981-2010)	15.3 °C (60°F)	20°C (68°F)	23.6 °C (74.5°F)	28.1°C (83°F)	28.2 °C (83°F)	22 °C (72°F)	12.9 °C (55°F)
Rainfall in 2018	89 mm (3.5 in.)	39 mm (1.5 in.)	57 mm (2.2 in.)	6 mm (.24 in.)	5 mm (.2 in.)	40 mm (1.57 in.)	44 mm (1.73 in.)
Average Rainfall (1981-2010)	59.3 mm (2.3 in.)	70.3 mm (2.77)	72.3 mm (2.84)	48.1 mm (1.89)	30.4 mm (1.2)	42.4 mm (1.67)	49.4 mm (1.94)

## **The Spring Season on the Upper Columbia River in the West Kootenays.**

We fish the 35 mile stretch of the upper Columbia River from the confluence with the Kootenay River down to the Canada-U.S. Border. In 2018 this tailwater fishery provided our anglers with great spring fishing from early April into late June.

We take two general approaches to fishing the Columbia. The first is to fish from our custom built jet boat using dry flies, nymphs or streamers. The boat has a wide beam that makes it both comfortable and very stable. The second approach is to get out of the boat and wade in from the wide cobblestone shorelines and big gravel bars. From here we cast dry flies using standard fly rods, or double handed spey rods.

The rainbow fishing on the Columbia is consistently productive from April through June. The spring weather is always a bit of a mixture of sun and showers. In general things were a little wetter than usual in April, but drier in May and June with only a few days of rain. We took our standard approach to spring fishing using streamers with a sinking line, as well as fly rods set up for nymphing. We carried dry fly rod setups in the event that a hatch popped off during the day. After powering to our destination of choice on the River, we would cut the motor and do a controlled drift downstream. During the drift we would fish along the bank edges and then slide into the big back eddies of revolving water where we would fish the seams and feed lines. Later in the spring we did more fishing from shore with the spey rods.

Most of the rainbows we land in the spring season are in the 16 to 22 inch range. In early April the average sized fish starts out smaller, increasing as the spring progresses through June. That said, one can land a bigger trout outside of this range at any time in the spring. This year we landed a nice assortment rainbows over 22 inches, including one beauty over 24 that weighed in at about 5 pounds! Catch rates are always pretty good in the spring ranging from 10-20 rainbows per

day, but as we all know catch rates are somewhat dependant on an angler's ability to cast.

In early April the water flow on the Columbia was typically low starting off at around 38 to 40 thousand cubic feet per second (CFS). These lower flows exposed a good amount of shoreline, rock and cobble piers and big in-river gravel bars. By May 1 the flows were up to around 65,000 CFS. From May 1 to the end of May flows increased to a peak of around 158,000. In June flows declined to around 100,000 by the 30th. The higher flows result in a fuller channel with less exposed gravel bars and cobble shoreline, but bigger eddies. As flows increase through the spring then stabilize for the summer, the fish tend to move from along the banks and runs into the big back eddies. So as time progresses we switch from drifting the runs and floating along the shorelines to more time spent fishing the feedlines in the big eddies.

The Columbia remained clear throughout the spring providing excellent fishing conditions. While there were a few days early on where the rising flows picked up some logs and wood debris and transported it in the water, it did not affect the fishing. We also experienced the typical robust hatches of caddis, callibaetis and mayflies. When you throw your line into the Columbia and hook one of its rainbows you don't have any idea what size of fish has taken your fly, but you can be assured once it hits, it will run and pull hard!

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

The St.Mary River was in good form by early July. On our July 4<sup>th</sup> float it was 28C° (82F°). The water was still a little high, but the pools and runs were well defined and crystal clear. The Stone Fly hatch was working its way upriver and a small caddis hatch was coming off. On the day we landed a good number of wild Westslope Cutthroat in the 13 to 15 inch slot, including one at 17. By late July the River was looking great with the average size cut increasing. The flows were

optimum as the stone flies were disappearing and the grasshoppers were now becoming more noticeable along the bank edges. We were now catching loads of Westslope Cutthroat to go along with the odd Bull trout and cutthroat-rainbow hybrid.

The Elk River was shaping up nicely by the end of the first week of July. On one of our first trips out in mid-July it was a scorching 35 C° (95 F°). The water was clear, the flows normal and the water temperatures were nice and cool! After the sun warmed up the water a bit the fish took the flies consistently as we landed and released a load of cutthroat in the 14 to 17 inch class. The only exception was one beautiful cut that came in at about 18 inches. The caddis were coming off nicely to go along with a few Green Drakes. The season was off to a great start.

By late July the weather was typically hot with clear skies as the St.Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck all had good clarity and flow, and were fishing well. The rivers were all seeing good catch rates and the cutthroats were healthy and colourful. We were enjoying a typical season of great fishing on our East Kootenay rivers.

Early August brought us more hot clear weather and some smoke drifting in from the distance wildfires from far off in North-Central B.C. We were also a month into a period of very little rainfall, but the flows and water temperatures in our streams continued to hold up well. On August 2 we fished the top section of the St.Mary River from the lake outflow downstream to the powerline takeout. Again, it was hot as the guys fished big attractor patterns along the bank edges. Their efforts were rewarded as they pounded the cuts in the 13 to 16 inch range. The biggest fish on the day was a brilliantly colored 18 inch cutty. At this point we were seeing lots of grasshoppers as they were starting to dominate the food stream with only a few stoneflies showing now.

By mid August we were seeing a lot of smoke in the air. But the quality of the fishing was holding up nicely. We were running the St.Mary and Elk rivers on a daily basis now. The water conditions were holding up

well and catch rates were as good as usual. On the Elk we were seeing hatches of Green Drakes and Mahogany Duns throughout the day with a few small Blue Winged Olives coming off as well. Everyone was having fun dry fly fishing the rivers now.

By early September we were seeing a reprieve from the smoke as the air was starting to clear up. When we hit the Elk River on Sept. 2 the skies were blue. On this float the fishing started off a little slow in the morning, but picked up after things heated up a little. The two anglers landed 30 to 40 cutthroat. The average size fish was 14 to 16 inches in length. The biggest fish landed was a nice 17 inch Cutthroat that was a beautiful picture fish. The St. Mary was also fishing well into September with lots of cutthroats being landed to go along with the odd 20 inch rainbow-cutthroat hybrid being netted. September also shows the results of a summer of heavy feeding as the fish were healthy and chunky. And once the kids are back in school it means angler pressure drops dramatically and these rivers are pretty well ours exclusively in September. Near the end of the month we started to see the kokanee entering the rivers in preparation for spawning. This signaled to us it was time to wrap up the season on the St. Mary and Elk rivers and head over to fish the upper Columbia River for the big rainbow trout.

### **Fall Fishing for Big Rainbows on the Upper Columbia River.**

By late September we were back over on the upper Columbia River chasing the big rainbows. Our rowable jet boat provides us with an excellent platform for fishing the Columbia. At this time of year the flows in the Columbia have decreased significantly from the summer peak uncovering the wide cobble shorelines creating a lot more fishable areas.

The weather this fall on the Columbia saw temperatures a little below normal and dry apart from a couple of days of rain in late October. On our September 27<sup>th</sup> float the Columbia was running at about 65,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) and was clear as a bell. The weather was

a warm 65°F (18°C) with only a few showers in the afternoon. We put the boat in at the launch at the City of Trail and powered up towards Castlegar at the top of the reach.

Our approach on the water was two fold. The first was to power upriver to the top of the big long runs, cut the motor and do a controlled drift under oar power downstream, casting towards the bank as we went. The second was to drift down into the big back eddies, then again under the power of the oars, hold in the prime water as the guys casted into the feed lanes. Both of these approaches provided lots of hits and plenty of fish were caught and released. The rainbows were feisty as usual! Typically one is never sure how big these fish are until it either jumps wildly or is pulled up from the depths. On this day the guys caught about 30 rainbows in the 18 to 21 inch slot, it was quite a day!

The fall produced a lot of beautiful, chunky rainbows over 20 inches, with the biggest coming in at 26 inches and about 6 pounds. We spent the bulk of our time fishing from the boat, but on occasion the anglers would get out onto the shore to cast their spey rods. Either from the boat or from the shore we caught a lot of nice rainbows and had a lot of fun out on the Columbia. The fall colours on the wide expansive valley of the Columbia were beautiful. It was a great month of October fishing to close off the 2018 season.

### **Annual Hosted Trip to Christmas Island**

In late February of 2018, we hosted our annual one week fishing trip to the Republic of Kiribati, also known as Christmas Island. Christmas is a giant coral atoll located 1,300 miles south of the Hawaiian Islands, 100 miles north of the Equator. As the host, we made all the arrangements booking our group of 13 into a local lodge. The lodge features air-condition bungalows with private baths, comfortably accommodating our group. All our meals were prepared by local chefs and served onsite in the dining room.

Each day the head guide scheduled our daily fishing venue according to the tide and sun position and interest of the angler. In the morning each group would leave the beach in their assigned skiff with their personal guide and boatman. Each angler had their own guide, so it is one on one, which is great for all fishers regardless of their level of skill.

On Christmas Island we fish for Bonefish, Giant Trevally (G.T.s) and trigger fish. The guide carries your 10-12 weight rod, while you fish for bonefish just in case a GT is spotted in your fishing area. We use 8 weight rods for the bones. For those fishers who needed it, we put together a gear package with custom tied flies.

Our group caught between 10-30 bonefish a day with chances to catch GT's and triggers. We also caught different reef fish occasionally when we would go further out. Bonefish average 2-6 pounds, but several fish over 8 pounds were caught. Many GT's were caught as well with the average size in the 5 to 10 pound range with opportunities at 50 plus pounds. That said, some of the guys were targeting the big GT's. The largest bonefish landed was 9 pounds while the biggest GT came in at a whopping 35 pounds!

We are taking a group to Christmas Island again this February 19 to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, departing flights from Honolulu. We still have 3 spots open so give us a call if you are interested in coming along. You will have a great time.

So there you have it, another year of great fishing with the St.Mary Angler is complete. We would like to thank all those anglers we accompanied out on the water this year and hope everyone had fun.

We greatly appreciated the patronage of our guide service and our fly shop located in Cranbrook, B.C. We would like to wish everyone an enjoyable Holiday Season with family and friends. We hope to see you again in 2019.

We will be attending tradeshow in Washington, Oregon and Colorado again in early 2019. We are now booking people into the 2019 season. If you have an interest in coming along with us to Christmas Island, or wish to book a trip to any of the rivers we float in B.C., give us a call to discuss your interest.

You can contact us anytime via our email or at 1-800-667-2311. We are always eager to talk about the fishing and be sure to follow us at the Facebook link below.

Take care,

***Kelly & Karen***

Kelly and Karen Laatsch

St.Mary Angler Fly Shop

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<https://www.facebook.com/StMaryAnglerBC>

PS To find out which tradeshow we will be attending in early 2019, go to <http://www.stmaryangler.com/tradeshows.html> for dates, locations and to contact us for will call tickets if you will be attending. To learn more about the rivers we fish check out <http://www.stmaryangler.com/riverft.html>.

**Report #18 (October 7, 2018)**

**The Columbia River is producing rainbows from top to bottom!**

Fall has arrived and the fly fishing on the Columbia River in southern B.C. has never been better. We are done guiding for cutthroats on the St.Mary and Elk rivers and are now chasing big rainbows on the Columbia till the middle of October.

The stretch of the Columbia River from Castlegar all the way down to the Canada/U.S. border has produced quite a few fish over the last couple weeks. Today our section of choice was the top end from Robson downriver towards Genelle. This section can be a little tricky, but we managed to find quite a few fish on this float. The daily temperature started off cool at around 3°C (38°F) climbing up to as high as 13°C (56°F) by mid-afternoon under clear fall skies. We hit the water by 10 a.m. and fish till after 6 p.m.

Before we hit the water, we had an assortment of rods strung with nymphs, streamers and dry flies so we could choose the best tool for what the Columbia would give us on the day. When you come on a trip with us you do not need to bring all your rods as we can supply whatever you need. That said, if you have your own Spey Rod you want to use, please bring it along.

At this time of year the conditions are right for casting spey rods along the broad shorelines of the Columbia if you choose. But we mainly fish from our rowable jetboat. We like to drift downstream casting along the bank edges for rainbow trout. On this day the two anglers caught and released about 15 rainbows each. The fishing is very productive now as the rainbow trout are very hungry and active at this time of year.

The average sized rainbow trout caught on the day was between 18 and 21 inches in length. We also landed a nice 25 inch rainbow that took the angler into the backing and jumped quite a bit, forcing us to chase it down the River in the boat so we could land it! We also managed to fool a nice rainbow on a dry fly which led to some nice pictures which was very exciting for the angler who caught him.

In terms of the hatches on the day, there were some Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis popping off throughout. That said, we mainly used Prince, Purple Prince and Hares Ear nymphs, as well as Kelly's Super Streamer and the Pickle. On the dry side we also tried a few caddis on the surface.

The anglers had a wonderful time on the water today. In addition to the wonderful fishing they took in all the bird life the River has to offer and the deer coming down to the shoreline to drink and browse.

While the fishing season window is closing, the weather is still holding nice and we still have a few days open in October. October fishing and the weather on the Columbia can be wonderful so if you can still get out on the River and fish, give us a call today.

We are now booking trips for next year, so if you know the dates you would like to come up and fish, feel free to call us soon to lock in the spots that work best for you.

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

## **Report #17 (September 23, 2018)**

### **The Columbia River is producing very well this fall!**

We are now into the last week of September and have moved over to the Columbia River for the final chapter of the 2018 season. While the

Elk River is still fishing very well, the dry fly window is shrinking to the mid-part of the day and the Columbia beckons!

As is typical for this time of year, we head over to fish the stretch of the Columbia from its confluence with the Kootenay down to the Canada-U.S. border. The fall fishing on the River into late October is very good and we have a number of eager anglers booked for trips to chase the big rainbows.

Today we put our jet boat in at the City of Trail and motored upstream towards the top of the stretch near Castlegar. As it is now cool in the mornings, starting out round 3°C (38°F) we usually hit the water at around 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. It is always a good idea at this time of year to dress in layers, so bring rain gear and your waders to stay warm and dry. The temperature reached a high of around 16 to 18°C (61 to 65°F) by the afternoon, with a few showers rolling through on the day.

In the fall we never know what the weather is going to bring. It can be sun, rain, clouds, then back to sunshine again all in a short period of time! So, it is always good to be prepared for any type of weather.

At this time of year fishers have the option to bring along their Spey rods and fish from shore. The shoreline of the Columbia River is strewn with cobbles that can be pretty slippery and generally tough to traverse, so the boat comes in very handy for accessing the best shoreline fishing spots.

Today we used the boat to power up to the top of the runs, then drift downstream under the power of the oars with the guys casting towards the bank edges. Once we hit a big back eddy the boat was held in place again using the oars, allowing the anglers to make casts into the premium fishing lanes.

The fishing at this time of year is very good and today was no exception. The guys caught and released about 30 rainbows between them; all very healthy and chunky. The rainbows fell into the 18 to 21

inch slot and many jumped wildly out of the water. They put on quite a show!

The flies used to catch these beautiful fish today included a variety of dries, nymphs and streamers. More specifically we used Blue Winged Olives, October Caddis and small midges as well as, Prince Nymphs, Copper Johns, Purple Prince nymphs, the Pickle and a variety of different colored streamers. The only hatches observed on the Columbia on this day were small midges and October Caddis.

We stayed out on the water fishing until the sun was almost gone at around 6.00 p.m. So with a start at around 9.30 to 10.00 it meant a full day of fishing out on the big water known as the Columbia River.

We expect to be out here fishing on the Columbia till the later part of October, or until things turn too cold and rainy. Until then there is plenty of fishing left so give us a call and we will see if we can fit you in.

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Stay tuned for another report on the Columbia.... Hoping to land some real big ones soon!

**Report #16 (September 15, 2018)**

**The Elk River is in peak fall form!**

Today we decided to fish the bottom section of the Elk River down to the old mill town of Elko in the southeastern corner of British Columbia. The weather has been kind of unpredictable the last few days; wait five minutes and everything changes! The storms and squalls have been moving through quickly; one moment you are getting wet and the next minute it turns nice and dry and warm!

The temperature has been quite cool in the mornings starting off at around 5 to 8°C (41-46°F) and only reaching a high of 15 to 18 (60-64°F) by the afternoon. We can sure feel the change in the air. Summer is definitely over and fall has arrived.

After the 45-minute drive from our fly shop in Cranbrook to the banks of the Elk we quickly put the boat in. Everyone put their dry fly rods together in short order. The drive is a great way to meet the day's clients and chat about the experience they are about to have.

The water level on the Elk is normal for this time of year. This means you have to get out of the boat on occasion to ensure there is enough water in some of the runs where the River braids. Other than that, things are fine.

As we floated down the River the anglers would cast along the bank edges making good drifts so the cutthroats would look up and take their fly. Fall on the Elk River is when you see many different hatches including; Green Drakes, Mahogany Duns and Blue Winged Olives. We have found that the fish will consistently come up and feed on these hatches. So if you can match the hatch and get a good drift on your fly you will be able to fool them most of the time.

By the fall the heavy feeding of the cutthroats over the summer means they have put on some girth and become nice and chunky fish!

The morning produced only a few cutthroat, but as the day warmed up the fishing became very good. The anglers ended up landing between 20 to 25 cutthroats each. The fish averaged 14 to 16 inches in length

and most were nice and chunky. The anglers landed a couple of nice cuts in the 18 inch range which left them a little surprised I think, but they got some nice photos to prove it.

At this time of year the cutthroats are very hungry and aggressive, so if you find the right pattern they will chase it all day long. You just have to be able to mend the fly so it looks like it's floating naturally. If it drags they won't even look at it.

The artificials used to match the hatches on the day were the Green Drakes, Blue Winged Olives and Mahogany Duns. We also used Fat Alberts, Chernobyl Ants, Purple Haze and caddis patterns with success.

The Elk Valley is a very beautiful place to fish as can you look up at the Rockies in between your casts. It is gorgeous and spectacular, or as the locals call it, "pure eye candy". In addition to all that scenery today we came across a herd of horses drinking from the waters edge, so we also had a little of the Wild West up close today.

As of the 23<sup>rd</sup> we will be starting our guided trips over on the Columbia River. I will let you know how the 'Big River' is fishing in my next report.

While summer is gone, the fall fishing is here. We still have many days left so get out there and enjoy some time in the outdoors!

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

## **Report #15 (September 7, 2018)**

### **The St.Mary River is looking good for fall!**

Today we stayed close to home and fished on the St. Mary River. The St. Mary drains part of the Purcell Mountain Range as it flows about 50 miles down to meet the Kootenay River near the historic site of Fort Steele.

We chose to float the section of the St. Mary from Wycliffe down to the takeout at the St. Eugene Mission. The weather pattern has begun to tilt towards fall, as the mornings are cool and we are seeing the odd rain shower during the day, typical for this time of year. The morning temperature is now a cool 6 or 7°C (43-45°F), warming up to the high teens °C (64-66°F) by the afternoon, with clear skies. So it is now cooler, but so much nicer than the smoke filled skies we had in parts of August.

We are now into our fall start time which means putting in on the St. Mary by around 9 a.m. It may sound a little late, but with the cooler starts the fish are not too active till the temperature rises a bit and rays of light hit the water. So when we hit the water we float for a little while, checking out the hatches and seeing if fish will come up for a dry. If not, we switch to the nymphs until it warms up enough to the liking of the these wild Westslope Cutthroats.

We have observed the Kokanee (a land locked sockeye) moving up the St Mary River since the last week of August/first week of September. They are getting ready to spawn and this can make it a little more difficult to dry fly fish for cutties. The cutthroats like Kokanee eggs for obvious reasons, but they will still come up to a well presented dry!

The morning part of the float saw the anglers catch only a few fish. It definitely picked up after lunch when the two anglers landed 25 and 30

fish between them. They caught a nice rainbow-cutthroat cross that jumped like crazy and turned out to be about 18 inches! Most of the cutthroats landed were between 14 and 16 inches, nice fish.

As for wildlife they saw eagles and ospreys, but no bears beside their signs along the shore. The bears are definitely in the river corridor now as they have been attracted by the spawning Kokanee. They are looking to fatten up on these tasty fish before winter.

The artificial flies used in the morning were mostly nymphs including; Prince Nymphs, Hare's Ear and Copper Johns. In the afternoon we switched over to dries including; Mahogany Duns, Green Drakes, Blue Winged Olives, various types of Caddis and foam patterns such as the black or red Fat Alberts.

### **Weather changes require a change in clothing**

This time of year we have to prepare for all the types of the weather we can get out on the water. So we always pack a rain jacket and warm clothes. The best approach is to dress in layers so as the day progresses and heats up, one can peel one or two layers off. You do not want to get caught on a float with too little clothing.

We will be guiding a number of days over on the Columbia River starting at the end of September. Our guides are getting very excited to fish for the big rainbows in that big piece of eddy driven water just above the Canada/U.S. boundary. Let us know if you want to come up and give it a shot before we put things away for winter!

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Give us a call at 1-800-667-2311 to chat about the great fall fishing opportunities we offer in southeastern B.C. There is still plenty of time yet to get out on the St. Mary, Elk or the Columbia with virtually no angler pressure!

## **Report #14 (September 2, 2018)**

### **The Elk River continues to produce very well.**

Today we decided to head back over to the Elk River near Fernie to fish. It was a beautiful fall day with a cool morning temperature of around 7°C (45°F) and an afternoon high of 20°C (70°F). There were only a few clouds in the sky which made for a glorious fall day on the water.

Our destination was the lower section of the Elk River from Morrissey down to Elko. There are many nice runs and deep holes in this section where the cutthroats like to hold and feed throughout the day on Mahogany Duns, Blue Drakes and Blue Winged Olives.

The Elk River has a lot of hatches throughout the day enticing the fish to rise steadily. Sometimes these wild Westslope Cutthroat can get quite picky which means we have to change the fly quite often to find out which one they are keying on.

Today we floated the water, casting along the bank edges, behind rocks and beside log jams. The anglers also got out of the boat and fished up certain runs; walking along the bank edges and casting their flies.

The fish sometimes like to hold much closer to the shore than one would think. So you do not have to always walk into the water before you cast. Or if you are casting from a drift boat, try to cast right along

the shore line shallows to entice these wonderful cutthroats to come up and feed. You will be surprised just how shallow they hold sometimes.

One thing about the cutthroats on the Elk River that is pretty predictable and consistent is the way they take the fly... very slowly. So once they hit, you have to wait and let them turn on the fly before you lift the rod, or you will lose them.

The fishing started off a little slow in the morning, but picked up after things heated up a little. The two anglers landed 30 to 40 cutthroat. The average size fish was 14 to 16 inches in length and they were all nice and chunky. The biggest fish landed was a nice 17 inch Cutthroat that was a beautiful picture fish. Overall the day was very successful and anglers were quite happy with their float.

The flies that were working today on the Elk included the Green Drakes, Grey Duns and Mahogany Duns. We also had good success with the Lime Trudes and the Purple Haze, in addition to Fat Alberts.

Today we had a lot of fun floating and casting, catching fish and checking out the scenery of the Elk Valley. As we floated along we saw an abundance of bird life, as well as a beaver hard at work and a couple deer running away from the bank edge. It is an absolutely beautiful place to be and the trees are just starting to turn their fall colours making it even more spectacular.

As for the smoke in our area it has now lifted and the skies are blue, clear and clean. The fires are in the mop up phase as fall approaches.

So that's great news for us fishers as we still have the month of September here in the East Kootenays to fish the Elk and St.Mary rivers. In middle September through October we will also be guiding over on the Columbia River for the big rainbows. So there is plenty of fishing yet to come!

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Give us a call to chat about the great fall fishing on the Elk and St.Mary or a trip over to the Columbia River to go after those big rainbows! Call us directly at 1-800-667-2311.

## **Report #13 (August 22, 2018)**

### **The Elk River is fishing very well.**

Today we decided to head over to the Elk River to fish for wild Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Unfortunately, there is still a lot of smoke in the air, but our rivers continue to fish great. The temperature this morning started off at a cool 7°C (45°F), and only reached a high of 20°C (70°F) on the day!

We decided to float the section of the Elk River from the old Morrissey town site down to the hamlet of Elko. We really like this to fish this section when it's not windy and today the wind was absent. So we picked up the anglers in Cranbrook, leaving around 7:30 a.m. and headed out towards our destination.

As we readied the boats for the day, the anglers readied their gear. They set up their fly rods with dry flies for the start of the day with the idea that they would occasionally change over to nymphs if the fish got fussy. Fortunately for us that did not happen and on the first cast we hooked up a nice cutthroat!

So the fish were interested in the dries right from the start. Every bug they tried seemed to catch one or two fish. Be it Mahogany

Duns, Blue-Winged Olives, Elk Hair Caddis or Green Drakes, they all worked well.

As we floated down the Elk River the anglers casted along the bank edges, behind rocks and they looked for any structure in the River to work. The fishing started off well and picked up after lunch till about 5:00 p.m. On the day each client caught, landed and released 22 to 25 fish.

The cutthroats averaged 15 to 17 inches in length and were their typically chunky self.

The Elk River is a limestone bottomed river which seems to lead to more hatches allowing the cutthroats to feed steadily throughout the day. So the Elk fish tend to have more girth than usual.

In terms of the hatches; Green Drakes and Mahogany Duns were coming off throughout the day. We also spotted a few small Blue Winged Olives hatching as well.

During the float we saw some resident eagles and ospreys patrolling the River corridor, but the deer were absent.

We are expecting to get some rain for the next couple of days, so the smoke should dissipate soon so we will be able to see the Rockies again.

The fishing remains very good even with the smoke. So the anglers are still getting a great fishing experience. We will keep everyone informed about the fires and the conditions in our area as things evolve.

We are looking forward to an awesome September and October. We still have a few days available so give us a call 1-800-667-2311 if you are free to come up and fish with us.

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS The Fall provides some of the best fishing of the year on the St.Mary, Elk and the Columbia River. So if you have the time, come on up!

## **Report #12 (August 15, 2018)**

### **The fishing on the St.Mary River remains strong despite the smokey skies!**

We are now in mid-August and the fire situation across British Columbia has created a lot of smoke right across the Province. Our beautiful blue-sky days are gone and we cannot even see the mountains at the moment! But the smoke aside, the rivers are still fishing very well and today our choice was to float the canyon section of the St.Mary River.

Lately the mornings have been cooler than usual because of the smoke cover. The air temperature is now starting out at around 14°C (57°F), warming up throughout the day to top out somewhere between 25° to 29 °C (77 to 84°F).

On this trip out the guys were on the water by 9.00 a.m. and fished hard all day. In order to fool the cutthroat on dries they casted along the bank edges, behind rocks and boulders and into some of the nice runs. They used a range of patterns including Fat Alberts, Purple Haze, Stimy Chew Toys, Chernobyl Ants and hopper patterns.

During the float the two anglers caught between 25 to 30 cutthroat trout between them with most in the 13 to 16 inch slot. The biggest fish landed was a nice rainbow-cut cross that came in at 21 inches. This cut-bow jumped and ran with power and put up a very good fight before they landed it and took quite a few pictures.

The fishing was better in the afternoon when the anglers landed most of their fish. They saw a good variety of bird life during the float including eagles and ospreys up above, and mergansers swimming in the river itself. During the shore lunch stop a few deer wandered along the River in front of them.

As for the fire situation in our corner of southeastern B.C., they have caused quite a bit of smoke. We understand a blanket is covering British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and parts of Ontario. We also hear the smoke situation is similar in Washington, Idaho and California. Hopefully, we will get some rain in the near future and the smoke will pass. We will keep you updated if anything changes in the backcountry in terms of closures.

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS check out the fly shop if you are in the area!

**Report #11 (August 2, 2018)**

**Its Summer Time and the Fishing is Easy on the St. Mary River!**

We have now cruised through July and turned the corner into August and the drive is going great! Today we rode the top section of the St. Mary River from the Lake down to the takeout at the power line.

It was a beautiful summer day with temperatures reaching a high of 30°C (86°F). We are now experiencing some smoke in the sky from wildfires, but luckily there are no fires close to us.

The water level of the St. Mary River is normal for this time of year. The St. Mary braids quite a bit which leads to some shallow water sections, but as we run Maravia rafts it allows us to move throughout the River with little problem.

The St. Mary is a true “freestone” river with an abundance of rolling rocks and very few hatches so the cutthroat tend to take a dry fly on the surface... that is when you get a good drift on your bug. Certainly, one can nymph the Mary, or throw streamers looking for bull trout with success, but there is nothing like seeing a cutthroat come to the surface to eat *your* dry fly!

So today the guys rigged up their fly rods, jumped in the boat and headed down river from just below the mouth of the headwater lake. The upper section of the St. Mary River is a stretch where there are lots of places to get out of the boat and fish up the back channels or take your time fishing the runs. This is the section of the River that is most wild and natural with no houses or structures to draw your eye, just trees that come right down to the bank edges.

The anglers did very well on this float as they fished big attractor patterns along the bank edges. Just a reminder that when you are fishing big foam flies, it helps if you shake or move them quite a bit to entice the fish to come to the surface. This duo of anglers showed a good grasp of the technique as they each landed around 20 fish today. The average sized caught and cutthroat released was in the 13 to 16-inch slot. They also landed a nice 18 incher which had the typical cutthroat brilliance of colour; it was a really nice fish.

In term of the hatches, we observed some stoneflies to go with the grasshoppers that are starting to show along the banks edges. We used a wide selection of patterns including; Purple Haze, Stimy Chew Toys (yellow and orange), Chubby Chernobyls (purple or brown), Royal Wulffs, caddis, Fat Alberts and grasshopper patterns.

Throughout the day on the water the anglers marvelled at the beautiful scenery as they casted towards rising fish. They were also treated to seeing some osprey and eagles in their nests high in the trees as they drifted past a couple of other anglers fishing from shore and enjoying the outdoors as well.

Just a reminder that when you are out fly fishing along the St. Mary River from shore the rocks are very slippery so you want to be wearing proper boots or shoes.

So come into our fly shop and check out the new Simms sandals and wading boots we have on display. You will be amazed at how they stick to the rocks which can make your life a lot easier when fly fishing along river banks.

Remember to get out there soon to enjoy the weather and the fishing as summer is slowly passing by... so enjoy it today!

Tight lines,

**Kelly**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Drop into our Fly Shop in Cranbrook if you are in the area!

## **Report #10 (July 23, 2018)**

### **Its Summer Time and the Bull River is Looking Awesome!**

It was another beautiful day in the East Kootenays today. The preferred destination was the Bull River so we loaded up the trucks and headed out. The Bull is about a 45-minute drive from our shop in Cranbrook to the put-in on one of the upper sections.

The temperature reached a high of 30°C (86°F), so summer is definitely here. We are now seeing a little bit of smoke in the air drifting over from the fires in the Okanagan Valley a couple of hundred miles to the west. That said, there are no fires currently burning in our region so all our rivers are open.

Once we arrived we rigged up our rods with dry flies and started to float down the River. The Bull is known for its big rock and boulders structures, as well as a few higher velocity sections where the guide has to be on the oars all the time. So, it really benefits those who are able to put the fly in behind rocks and along bank edges. In addition, you sometimes have to land the fish on your own with all the stuff going on!

There are some sections of the Bull River where you can get out and fish from shore. But the Bull is a classic high mountain stream with forest cover coming right down to the water's edge. So the best way to fish it, is to float it.

On this trip, the anglers caught and released about 40 cutthroat trout between the two of them. All the fish were very healthy and strong, putting up a good fight. The average size cut was between 13 and 14 inches, with a few in the 16 in range - which is pretty hefty for the Bull River.

There is one section on the Bull that flows into a canyon which has a very deep pool. Some of the cutthroat caught in here take on the color of the water and thus look very blue, it is so cool to see them like this!

We did see a few caddis flies hatching along with some stone flies. In response, we tossed a few different patterns including; Orange Stimulators, H&L Variants, Purple Haze, Fat Alberts and Schroeder's Caddis.

When fishing with foam bugs you must first give it a good mend after the cast then give it a little shake, or a pop, on the water. You want the fish to think the bug is moving and struggling to get off the water, so this is a very good technique to bring the fish to the surface. When it works, it feels so good to fool these cutthroats!

We saw quite a bit of bird life along this float including; eagles and ospreys as well as a couple deer walking along the bank edges.

The Bull is one of our floats that is exceptionally beautiful with mountain views all around.

While summer has been here for a while and we are almost into August there still is a lot of the dry fly season left. So, come up and check out our beautiful area, you will not be disappointed!

We hope to see you on the water this summer.

Tight lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Come into our Fly Shop in Cranbrook and check out our great selection of flies. We also have a lot of local knowledge of the rivers in our area that we are happy to pass along.

## **Report #9 (July 17, 2018)**

### **The Elk River is Rounding into Form.**

Today our destination was over on the Elk River where we floated one of the lower sections down to the community of Elko. It was another beautiful day with temperatures reaching a high of 35°C (95°F). One definitely needs to wear the sunscreen, hat and sunglasses now, in addition to drinking a lot of water on hot days like today.

Driving over to the Elk River from Cranbrook means we have to leave early in the morning so we can hit the water when things are still cool. Something we strive to do when the heat of summer is upon us. Once on the River we rigged up the dry lines, put the pontoon boat in the water and headed out on an early start.

The water flow on the Elk River is normal for this time of year. Water temperatures remain pretty cool slightly warming as the day proceeds. Our approach was to float along looking for any log jam, boulder, or any such structure so we could throw the fly into the downstream eddy or pool to pull out a nice cutthroat trout.

It was a little slow in the morning so we tried nymphing for a while. As soon as the air temperature warmed up the dry fly action commenced as the cutthroats started to come to the surface to hit any fly with a good drift.

The fish took the flies pretty consistently for the rest of the day and the two anglers landed about 45 fish between them. The guys were

ecstatic with their fishing success and really enjoyed the shore lunch break in the middle of the day. Our shore lunch always gives the anglers and the guide a chance to sit back and relax over a nice meal; reflecting on the morning fishing and looking forward to what the afternoon may bring.

As it turned out the dry fly fishing was very good throughout the afternoon. The biggest fish caught was a lovely 18-inch cutthroat. These Elk River fish tend to be very chunky and healthy and this one fit the description perfectly.

The caddis were coming off nicely today, in addition to a few Green Drakes. This hatch provided a lot of action and made it very fun for us to cast Stimulators, Purple Haze, Caddis, Fat Alberts and Green Drakes which all worked fairly well.

In terms of the wildlife we saw a number of eagles and ospreys throughout the float.

All the rivers we fish in the East Kootenay Region of B.C. are now experiencing good summer dry fly fishing conditions. So come on up and enjoy the splendor of the Rockies and the pleasure of our dry fly fishing!

Make sure you check your regulations before you head out.

Have a wonderful summer wherever you end up fishing.

Tight lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book your cutthroat trout trip today!

## **Report #8 (July 9, 2018)**

### **St.Mary River Report**

Our latest report is on the St.Mary River. The weather was absolutely gorgeous on this float with a high of 31°C (88°F), it is definitely time for the sunscreen. The wind picked up slightly in the afternoon, but it was not a problem.

We all met up at our Fly Shop early in the morning to purchase the fishing licences and peruse our wide selection of flies. We then packed up all the fishing gear in the boats and drove over to float the Canyon Section on the St.Mary River; from Wycliffe down to the St. Eugene Mission. We got on the River at around 9.00 a.m. just after sun had hit the water, warming it slightly and sending shafts of light through the water column.

We started by casting along the bank edges, behind big rocks and obstructions and into the nice runs. Occasionally we would take a quick break from the casting to look up and enjoy the scenery as the St.Mary provides a beautiful backdrop to your dry fly fishing experience!

The fishing was slow in the morning, but built throughout the day. By the late afternoon the fishing was great!

The water temperature is still quite cool, and as always, one needs to get a good drift so the fish can see the fly before it will be enticed to come to the surface. The fish still seem to be moving into their summer lies, so things are still in a little bit of flux.

The anglers caught and released around 20 wild Westslope Cutthroat Trout. The cutties all looked very healthy and fought hard. The

average sized fish was 13 to 15 inches with the biggest being a nice 21-inch Cutthroat/Rainbow hybrid. This 'cutbow' ran hard and the angler had a great fight till he brought it to the boat and got a wonderful picture.

The dry flies used on the trip included; Orange and Yellow Stimulators, Stimy Chew Toys, Purple Haze, Purple Chubby and Fat Alberts. In terms of the hatch, the stone flies have only slowly started to show, but the water is still high and cool for this time of year and once it drops we will see the stones move into full-hatch mode.

The St.Mary River is slowly warming up and dropping. We expect the dry fly fishing to only improve from now on.

During the float, we saw eagles and ospreys circling above, as well as a couple of mule deer down sipping water at the edge of the River. We never know what wildlife we will see, but there always seems to be something around the many bends and twists of the River.

Come on in and check out our Fly Shop as we have a great selection of flies and wide assortment of fly fishing gear. We are also willing to share our knowledge on where to go and what to use on the water to improve your chances of having a successful trip!

Have fun out in the backcountry and make sure you read all the regulations before you wet the line.

Tight lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book your float for this summer or fall!

## **Report #7 (July 4, 2018)**

### **The St.Mary River is Ready To Go!**

The St. Mary River is looking beautiful this time of year. The water is dropping and the River is running crystal clear. All our guides are ready to go and fishing is improving daily.

Today we floated from the Pump House down to the St. Eugene Mission, a 'double run'. The water is still on the high side so we knew we could get away with fishing two sections at this time of year. The weather was absolutely gorgeous today with clear skies and the temperature reaching a high of 28°C (82°F). In the afternoon the wind decided to pick up and the casting got a little tricky for the anglers, but they still had a great day on the water.

The water temperature was around 10°C (50°F) this morning. The water level is dropping daily and the pools are formed up and runs are well defined. The cutthroat and bull trout have been moving up into their summer feeding stations. The River is all setup now and the fish are where you would expect them to be.

The guys casted dry flies at the trout all day. The only exception was a youngster who got to throw nymphs to help him hook up on a fish or two; and he was very excited to land a lovely wild Westslope Cutthroat. The experienced anglers landed 17-20 fish with the average size in the 14 to 16-inch slot. One of the clients landed a nice 17-inch cutthroat. His dry fly fooled the big guy into coming up to the surface and taking it along a big old log. The fish fought well and the log made for a tricky landing. The cuts tend to move slowly so when they take the fly you have to be prepared to not pull the trigger too fast. You want the fish to eat it before you act to set the hook.

On the River today the guys noticed a small caddis hatch, along with some stone flies coming off. This is a fun time of year to throw big stone flies out there like; Stimulators, Stimy Chew Toys, Black and Red Fat Alberts, Purple Chernobyl Ants, Split Wing Purple Haze, and any of the other cool looking stone fly patterns we have in the store!

As the guys floated down the River today they saw some whitetail deer, eagles and osprey doing their thing. They also noticed just how much work the beavers have already done this spring along the banks of the River.

The season is in now in 'full go' mode in terms of the fishing and we still have some guided days available. So give us shout and come and check out our special little corner of British Columbia. In addition to the cutthroat fishing the backdrop provided by the Rocky and the Purcell mountain ranges makes for a special experience!

Tight Lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a float today!

## **Report #6 (June 17, 2018)**

### **All Our Rivers are Open; St.Mary River Report.**

The rivers in our corner of B.C. all opened on June 15<sup>th</sup>, so the beginning of the dry fly fishing season for cutthroats has begun...yay!

Every year we take all our guides on a reconnaissance float down the St. Mary River to see how the river morphology has changed. So, our small flotilla of drift boats put in at the Golf Course in Kimberley and we floated all the way down to the confluence of the Kootenay River, hauling out at Fort Steele. The weather was fairly good on this day with only a few clouds in the sky and temperatures reaching 22°C (72°F). It got a little windy as the day progressed, but as we closed in on the Kootenay River the wind turned into a blessing as it swept away the mosquitos!

Throughout the float we were constantly looking to see how the River had changed at all our favorite runs and holes. Many trees had fallen in along the River as the channel moved, reacting to the spring freshet. Some of the clay banks are now eroding away, clouding up the water a bit. But as the water flow decreases and drops away from the high banks into the cobbles and gravels, the clay banks will stop giving up their tea stained material. The St. Mary River is still a bit high, but is clearing up nicely.

The cutthroat trout are just coming off the spawn and are finding their way to their summer feeding zones. We decided early on to just to throw dry flies leaving the streamers and nymphs in storage. After all we know we can catch these guys on nymphs and streamers and our real goal for today was to see if the fish are dry fly ready!

Some of the guides in the other boats threw streamers and hooked into some nice bull trout and cut-bows in the deeper holes. Our boat, with our dry fly approach, landed about 10 cutthroats and missed a few more that came up and hit but got off right away! The cutthroats we landed averaged in the 13-15 inch range and looked like they had wintered quite well; lots of colour and healthy looking. The water temperature was about 5°C (41°F). So things are still pretty chilly in the water which definitely suppressed the activity as the cutthroats as they were very slow to come to the surface. But we did fool a few!

In terms of the bugs, some stone flies were hatching during the float, but we are not in full go mode quite yet.

It was a lot of fun to get out on the Mary for the first time this season and it was really educational to see the whole River in one shot. The downside was we had to cover so much water in on the day that we could not get out of the boat to fish the back channels much. It was pretty well a day of fishing along the bank edges and behind big rocks and along the log jams in an effort to fool a fish on the dry fly! Today we needed to drift the fly for quite a distance so the cutthroat could spot it and make a play for it. As per usual if the fly dragged at all they passed up the opportunity and there would be not hit on that cast.

The artificial flies that were working today were stone patterns; such as Orange and Yellow Stimy Chew Toys, Red and Black Fat Alberts, Chernobyl Ants, Turks Trantula, and Golden/Black Butt stoneflies.

The guides chasing the bull trout were using the white Muddy Buddies and the white Dali-Lama streamers in addition to the Golden Stonefly nymphs.

We saw plenty of bird life out on the St.Mary including; bald eagles and osprey high above and mergansers cruising along the bank edges.

Welcome to the 2018 season! The rivers are just rounding into form. Remember to check the regulations before you head out on the water and have fun!

Tight Lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book your summer float trip now as the prime days are starting to go fast!

## **Report #5 (May 28, 2018)**

### **The Confluence of the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers is the Place to Hook Some Nice Spring Rainbows!**

Today we were out on the uppermost stretch of the Columbia River we fish; from Castlegar down to the confluence with the Kootenay River. This section can be very productive, but with the River this high we have to search out the big back eddies for the prime water. The daytime high reached a very comfortable 28°C (83°F). Some high clouds came in late in the afternoon causing the air temperature to cool down somewhat, but overall it was a very nice day to be out on the water.

We launched the boat upstream of the confluence of the two rivers and jetted down to where we spotted a nice looking set of eddies. There is still a good amount of debris on the water so one has to be very careful out there now. A lot of the woody debris gets caught up in the back eddies; swirling round and round. It tends to track the path of the big eddy currents and comes in and out of the way our fishing activities.

The fish like to hang out where the food is being concentrated by the currents. So after reading the water the key is to identify a few target areas to throw your line. If you get the right drift into these sweet areas, the trout will slurp down your fly and you are in business.

The morning started off slow with the guys picking up a couple of fish early on. After working a couple of the eddy structures, towards 11:00 a.m. they found some trout that were eager to play. In a

single eddy the guys proceeded to catch and release 8 to 10 rainbows over the next hour. By then it was lunch time so we stopped to dine on the banks of the Columbia.

By the end of the day the fishers had landed 30 to 40 fish, all in the 18 to 22 inch range. These fish looked chunky and brite, they are obviously eating well! Some of the trout jumped like crazy and gave the anglers some good fights. The guys took lots of pictures and were very happy with their day on the River.

Our approach on the water today consisted mostly of fishing with a nymph and indicator. That said, we did throw a few streamers through the eddies to see if the fish wanted something bigger. We used the typical patterns for this time of year. In terms of nymphs we used; the Prince, Hare's Ear and Copper John's, sizes 8 to 12. The streamer patterns included; Kelly's Super Streamer, Pat's Rubber Legs and some Sculpin patterns, sizes 8 to 12.

As per usual we saw a lot of bird life out on the water today including a number of osprey, eagles, swallows and Canada geese.

### **Regional Roundup:**

Local fishers have been coming into the shop with lots of reports on the lakes in the Cranbrook area. Whitetail Lake is still fishing quite good, but the fish have recently moved out into deeper water. So you want to be using 20 foot leaders now when fishing Chironomids. Anglers are also doing very well fishing damsels, dragons, leeches and booby flies along the dropoff ledges.

Premier and Whiteswan lakes have also been fishing well. Again at Premier Lake the fish have moved into deeper waters. When you first get onto these lakes we encourage you to take some time and cruise around for a while looking for fish. If you see some then anchor up and begin to cast. Whether you are fishing Chironomids, balanced

leeches, damsels or dragons it always pays to do a little looking around first.

Presently all the insects on the lakes seem to be hatching, so you have many types of flies and fishing techniques at your disposal to catch rainbows. One of the keys to success is to remember to change things up once in a while if you are not catching fish, or even if things just slow down. Fly fishing is a sport that provides you many different tools to do your job, so feel free to use all of them!

When in Cranbrook feel free to stop by our shop to find out what lakes are heating up and which ones are cooling down. It could save you a little driving time.

The river flows and levels are starting to drop in the East Kootenays. The St. Mary River is starting to get a green tinge to it so we are now past the peak freshet and moving towards it being fishable... yay. We will be checking the rivers when they open on June 15th to see if they will be fishable right away, then we will let you know.

Tight Lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a summer float trip on the St.Mary, Elk, Bull or Skook rivers.

**Report #4 (May 26, 2018)**

## **Victoria Day fishing on the Columbia River is awesome!**

This past weekend was the Victoria Day long weekend in Canada, giving some of us the Monday off to go fishing. Thanks Queen! As per usual at this time of year the weather is pretty nice. Recent days we have seen sunny skies with temperatures reaching highs of 25-28°C (77-83°F). We have definitely given up on the waders now as it feels like summer fishing in May.

Once again, this spring we are seeing high temperatures and very low precipitation around much of B.C. Hopefully rain will start to show up in June. The Columbia River is presently flowing at around 158,000 Cubic Feet per Second. So water levels remain high, but the floating wood debris is slowly clearing out of the eddies as the River moves all the logs and debris down out of this stretch of water. The River is flowing high enough now that some of the eddies are disappearing, but there are still plenty of eddies left and lots of places to fish!

Today we decided to head out on our lowest stretch of the River flowing downstream from the City of Trail to the Canada/US border. All the rods were set up in advance and stored in the boat as usual, so getting onto to the water and ready to fish was a breeze.

We pointed the jet boat downstream and proceeded to the areas that looked like prime holding spots for some nice big rainbows. As we moved towards the top of an eddy the motor was cut and we began to float under the control of the oars. The anglers began by making casts of 30 to 40 feet from the boat; hoping to entice a nice rainbow to their flies. At this early stage of the trip they were casting nymphs with an indicator and swivel to get the fly down into the current. This type of fishing has produced very good results under these high flow conditions.

The challenge to these current conditions is figuring out where the fish are feeding, as well as navigating the River under high flows. That is

why being out with an experience guide can speed up your learning curve, as well as keep you safe... something that is important at this time of year.

On this trip the anglers caught and released around 35 rainbows between the two of them. The trout mostly ranged in size from 18 to 21 inches in length. But again we hooked a few fish in the 23-inch range .... and some of these fish are crazy strong. Once hooked most of the fish jumped and some ran the fishers into their backing. You never know what size of fish you are going to catch; some of the 16 to 18 inchers pull just as hard as the bigger guys. The trout in the River now are in very good shape and strong. Most of the rainbow spawning in the mainstem seems to be over, but many fish are now moving into the tributaries to spawn as their flows drop.

In terms of the bugs on the water, a black caddis hatch was coming off throughout the day in addition to some small midges popping off fairly steadily. The artificial patterns that work best for us included the different nymph patterns, including the Purple Prince, Hare's Ear, Copper Johns and Pat's Rubber Leg (aka The Pickle). All these patterns were sizes 8 to 14.

### **Regional Round-up for South Eastern British Columbia**

The lakes in our region including; Premier, Whiteswan, Whitetail, etc. have all been fishing very well the last couple of weeks. As always it depends on the day, but as it is nearing the end of May most of the food on the lakes is in full bloom. Mayflies, dragons, damsels, leeches, balanced leeches, chironomids, are all out and in the water for the fish to eat.

So when you are out on the lakes, remember to start out by cruising around looking for fish. If you see some in the shallows anchor up and try chironomids if the hatch is coming off. If you do not see a hatch then hang a micro leech, or a balanced leech under an indicator as these can be very effective fishing methods! Some guys fish dragons

or damsels along the shallows with a wet line as well. Sometimes a big trout will just come up and hammer the fly when using this method. Whatever the way you prefer to fish the key thing is to get out on the water and try it!

When on the water always be careful, use life jackets and remember to read the regulations in advance of the place you are going to fish. While the lakes are producing well, the rivers are still high and dirty due the freshet and closed till June 15<sup>th</sup> (with the exception of the Columbia and Kootenay rivers)

Tight Lines,

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS When you are in Cranbrook feel free to come by the shop and check out our extensive selection of flies and learn what lakes are fishing best in our area. Call 1-800-667-2311 to book a summer float.

## **Report #3 (May 13, 2018)**

### **Water Levels are Rising Across the Province as the Columbia River Continues to Fish Well!**

The spring freshet is now in full swing and the weather has been absolutely beautiful. We are now seeing warm temperatures reaching highs off 28-30°C (80-86°F) in the West Kootenay region of B.C.

The deep snowpack and early season hot span are having an impact on our rivers and lakes. To the west of us, the Kettle and Granby rivers have breached their banks. The result is that many homes and businesses in the Grand Forks area have received water damage. With so much snow in the mountains the water has headed into the historic floodplain, where many people live. This flooding is not good for structures, but is part of the natural hydrological cycle which renews the river habitat that fish depend on.

The Columbia River has risen quite a bit in the last few days and is now flowing at around 130,000 CFS (3,600 CMS). Water releases from the upriver dams is increasing which means the Mighty Columbia River is living up to its name.

Under these conditions, the Columbia River has quite a bit of woody debris on the surface now. And for good reason the trout love hanging around this concentrated material where they gorge themselves on all the food that accumulates with it.

The anglers were on the water at around 9:00 a.m. this morning. We put the jet boat in at the boat launch in Trail and headed upstream inspecting the eddies and watching out for rogue logs on the way. Fishing from shore is not an option right now, so being in our nimble jet boat is the best way to go. Once we hit the top of our chosen eddy, we shut off the motor and drifted down into the prime water allowing the anglers to throw streamers and or nymphs. Either technique works quite well on the River at this time of year.

During the outing the two anglers landed 15 to 18 rainbows each. Many of these fish were in the 16 to 18 inch range, with a few bigger ones in the 19 to 21 inch slot. These rainbows are very strong and look like shimmering silver bullets when landed. After the hookup, some of the rainbows made big runs almost into the backing, in addition to several jumps out of the water providing lots of excitement. Even the smaller fish are strong fighters. Given the number of large

trout in this River you never really know what size fish you have hooked until you see it near the surface... so much fun!

The weather became hot very quickly today so we are already seeing caddis hatching on the water. As usual we saw lots of bird life on the River today including ospreys, eagles and some Canadian Geese to name a few of the bigger species.

The flies working best today included different types of Chironomids (yes, just like on the lakes). Prince nymphs, Copper John's nymphs, Lightening Bugs, as well as black streamers and, of course, the Pickle streamer also produced well.

### **Regional Roundup:**

All the rivers in the East Kootenay region of southeastern B.C. are closed right now from April 1st to June 15th because of run-off and spawning. The only rivers open all year round are the Columbia and Kootenay rivers.

The lakes have all been fishing quite well, but this can change from day to day. As with all types of fishing, lakes can get moody. But given we are now in May, all the food is out on the water including; Chironomids, Balanced Leaches, Callibaetis, Dragon Fly Nymphs, Booby Flies, etc., so the fish are actively feeding.

When you are in Cranbrook feel free to come by the shop and check out our extensive selection of flies and learn what lakes are fishing best in our area.

The weather is now beautiful so it is time to get out and enjoy nature.

Hope to see you on the water this spring!

**Kelly and Karen**

## **St.Mary Angler**

PS Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a summer fly fishing trip on one of the rivers we fish.

### **Report #2 (May 5, 2018)**

#### **The Rainbows on the Columbia River are Settling Down and Biting Hard!**

We are now into May and the Columbia River has been on fire! The big rainbows have been feeding steadily for some time now and we are hooking loads of fish. The spawning period for rainbows in the mainstem of the River is coming to an end. The fish are now moving into and setting up in their feeding lanes and eating steadily, so once you find a few you know there will be more in that area.

We start our Columbia trips by picking up the anglers from their accommodations in Rossland, B.C., where with coffee in hand, we head down into the valley for a day of fishing.

The weather has started to get very nice lately with temperatures reaching highs of 25°C (77°F) in the Trail to Castlegar stretch of the Columbia. That said, we are still dressing in layers as it remains a little cool and crisp in the morning and one does not want to have to wear waders at this time of year. When the sun comes out and you get the reflection off the water, all of a sudden it gets hot out there.

The flows and associated water levels on the Columbia are definitely rising now and currently sit at around 2,300 cubic meters per second (81,000 cubic feet per second). We expect them to keep on rising for

some time as the freshet builds. This is the time of year when you must be very aware of your surroundings when managing a boat out on the Columbia.

The rising flows pick up a lot of logs and associated debris from the shore, transporting everything into the water. The boat pilot must always be looking around as people fish. The floating debris can get caught up in the big back eddies and rotate back at you causing a real mess. So you want to be vigilant when out on the Columbia at this time of the year.

Today we launched the boat at Genelle and moved upstream towards Castlegar to fish. We cruised upriver in the jet boat until we passed a big eddy that looked promising. We continued upriver a bit then cut the motor and drifted down into the eddy under the control of the oars where we started to fish.

As dictated by the time of year, the anglers used both streamer and nymphing techniques. The fish near the boat tend to be a little spooked, so one needs to cast about 30-40 feet out away from the boat to get into the calmer fish. Casting a little further away also allows you to get a good drift on the fly so the fish can be fooled into taking it!

On this float the anglers caught around 20 fish each with the biggest fish coming in at about 22 inches. They saw a lot of fish in the 17-19 inch slot. Some of the rainbows were chrome colored, healthy and strong. Others had a dark red stripe down the side of the body, just fresh from spawning.

Throughout the day small midges and black caddis were hatching, but the fish seemed to be keying on nymphs and streamer patterns rather than dry flies. The flies that were used included; Pat's Rubber Legs, Sculpin patterns (Green or Tan), Prince Nymphs (Purple and Regular), Copper Johns and Hare's Ear Nymph (sizes 12 to 14).

We saw a lot of bird life on the water today. While the Canada Geese were working along the shoreline, we could see the eagles spotting fish from high up in nearby trees. We also saw hundreds of swallows swarming over the water eating the midges, which we take as a good sign that fish will be feeding on them as well!

### **Regional Roundup:**

Back over in the East Kootenays around our flyshop in Cranbrook the fishing in the lakes is taking off! Most all the lakes have iced off, including White Swan and White Tail Lakes. The fish are now busy gorging themselves making them catchable on the many different types of Chironomids, Balanced Leeches, Micro Leeches, Dragon Nymphs and Booby Fly techniques.

If you are in the Cranbrook area and want to get out on the water, come down to the fly shop to check out the products and chat about the opportunities. We can outfit you for the water as well as discuss the latest information on our various lakes and what fly is working best at certain times.

The fish are now biting, so welcome to the 2018 season of fly fishing!

See you out on the water soon.

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

PS Feel free to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a trip on any of the rivers we fish. Don't forget to review the new freshwater fishing regulations for British Columbia before heading out on the water.

## **Report #1 (April 21, 2018)**

### **The Early Fishing on the Columbia River is producing Lots of Rainbows.**

The 2018 fishing season on the Columbia River has begun! The River is still in its normal flow range for this time of year, running at about 1,100 cubic meters per second (40,000 cubic feet per second). The tributary streams entering the Columbia have started their run off. The freshet has come very late spring this year as the grip of winter has only recently let go.

We have been on the water for over a week and half now and have found the rainbows to be pretty active for this early in the season. While some local anglers fish the Columbia River all year round, including the winter when the temperatures are above freezing, we wait for spring.

On this particular day, the weather was typically “spring like” which means “all over the map” including both sunny and rainy periods. The temperature started at around 5 °C (41°F), but reached a comfortable high of 14 °C (58 °F) by mid-afternoon.

These spring conditions mean we have to be prepared for all types of weather. So we wear layers of clothing to stay warm and dry, but allowing us to shed one or two of them when the sun comes out and warms everything up nicely.

On this day, we picked up the anglers from their hotel and headed down into Trail B.C. where we launched at the Indian Eddy boat launch at Gyro Park.

We set up the rods in advance for both nymphing and casting streamers and headed upriver to check out some of the spots where we know the fish hold this time of year. Once we arrived at our starting point we cut the engine and started to drift downstream under the control of the oars. Our boat allows us to power upriver then basically turns into a drift boat. As we drifted the anglers fished along the bank edges and around the big rock structures until we reached a big back eddy where we settled in for a while. This is a good approach for us as the fish at this time of year are transitioning between the runs along the bank edges into the big eddies.

In terms of the hatch today, small midges and Blue Winged Olives were coming off sporadically throughout the day. The anglers caught many fish in the 15 to 18-inch range, but no big guys were hooked. Between the two of them, they caught and released about 30 fish which is awesome for this early in the fly fishing season.

The most effective artificial flies on this trip were the Purple and Regular Prince Nymphs (sizes 10 to 14), Pat's Rubber Leg, Kelly's Super Streamer and green or tan Sculpins (sizes 8 to 12).

Using our rowable jet boat on the Columbia gives us a lot of flexibility. It allows us to power around to different stretches of shore line where we can get out and cast, or wade in the shallows. As the fish move from the runs into the back eddies on mass we will tend to row the eddies fishing from the boat most of the day. As we are early in this process we are doing both types of fishing.

Today we were able to see both eagles and ospreys tending their nests along the River, as well as watch groups of turkeys moving along the shoreline. So, there was lots of action on and off the water today.

**Regional Roundup:**

The Lakes in the East Kootenay Region have just started to ice off. Premier, Horseshoe and Campbell Meyer Lakes just came clear in the last couple of days. Edwards Lake has been ice free for a few weeks now. We are getting quite a bit of wind the last couple of days and they are calling for hot temperatures next week so more lakes will bust loose soon! We will keep you posted.

If you are in the Cranbrook area stop in and check out all the new stock in the fly shop. 2018 spring has brought us lots of new items to help you catch lots of fish.

If you are heading out on the lakes; chironomids and balanced leeches are the flies you should be using at this time of year. Come in and check out our selection at the shop and we will help you get the supplies that suit your fishing techniques and destinations.

And don't forget to review the new freshwater fishing regulations for British Columbia.

See you out on the water soon.

**Kelly and Karen**

**St.Mary Angler**

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