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St. Mary Angler Guide Service: a review of the 2021 fishing season.

Overview

The Covid-19 Pandemic again had a profound impact on our lives in 2021. By the start of the season in May, the U.S. border remained closed, along with our border with neighboring Alberta. Within B.C. one could only travel within the three designated regions within the Province...so we continued to be shut out from guiding.

The travel restrictions within B.C. and Alberta were lifted in late June. It was not until early August, when for the first time in 17 months, Americans were allowed to cross the land border into Canada to fish with us. While this was great news, by then most people had made their travel plans so we did not see that many of our southern neighbours till the fall. But those who did venture north, were as happy to see us as we of them! We had some nice reunions for sure. So, we managed to stay afloat in 2021 in large part through the patronage of the locals and those Western Canadians who 'stay-cationed' in our part of the world. 2021 was another year of learning more about patience, perseverance, survival and hope! That said, the fishing was still pretty good!

The Conditions in 2021

Last winter brought us a snowpack that was more or less just above what we usually get. On May 1st the snowpack was 'slightly above normal' across British Columbia. The snowpack in the East Kootenay region, which includes the St. Mary, Elk, Bull and Skookumchuck rivers, was at 94% of 'normal'. Over in the West Kootenays, where we fish the Columbia River, it was 91%. So, we started the year with a little less snow than the long-term average.

Spring temperatures across B.C. for the month of April were normal as a whole, except for a strong ridge of high pressure from April 14 to 18th. During this period many new daily maximum temperature records were set throughout B.C. The hot spike also resulted in the rapid melt of lower and mid-elevation snow to kickstart the freshet.

April was a very dry month. By mid-May the accumulated snowpack was still holding firm in the West Kootenay, but disappearing quicker in the East Kootenay. By June 1st about half of the snowpack was melted. Very warm temperatures in the first week of June allowed the rivers to hit their peak runoff in mid-June, but with no flooding to speak of. By the end of June three quarters of the pack was gone as per normal, but then came “Heat Dome 2021” from June 25-July 1.

Wow did things get hot, we experienced temperatures as high as 39.2°C (102.5°F). The hottest temperature in the Province topped out at 49.6C (121.3) on June 30th in Lytton, B.C., a few days before their devastating wildfire. The result of the intense heat for us was the rivers cleared up and dropped quickly. So, we started fishing the St.Mary and Elk rivers in late June, a little earlier than we usually expect to hit the water.

In the East Kootenays we saw higher than average rainfall in August and October, but things were drier than normal in May, June, July and September. The August rainfall was a blessing after the dry and hot start of the summer and effects of the Heat Dome.

In terms of air temperature in the East Kootenays, it was quite a bit hotter than normal from May through July, cooling in August. June and July were scorching hot with the average daily max. (+5.4°C) and (+6.7°C) warmer than usual. August at (-1.9°C) below the average was a needed reprieve.

In terms of forest fires, the 2021 season was the third worst on record for B.C. While we did see smoke from wildfires from other parts of B.C. and south of the Border blowing in to our region, it did not have any serious impact on our operations.

The warmer summer temperatures and lower rainfall did create some challenges as the water temperatures became elevated. Fortunately, the August rains and cooling trend put things back into equilibrium and the fish were fine.

Over on the Columbia River in the West Kootenays, the air temperatures were also a little warmer than usual in the spring and fall when we were guiding over there. Rainfall was mostly below normal leaving us with some lovely spring and falls days on the water. As the Columbia is a “tailwater fishery”, located downstream of a dam, the water conditions in the spring and fall were normal and we experienced very good fishing conditions in 2021.

East Kootenay Temperature and Rainfall (Stn: ‘Cranbrook Airport Auto BC’):

Month	May	June	July	August	September	October
Temperature in 2021	18.3 °C (65°F)	27.0°C (80.6°F)	32.9°C (91.2°F)	24.1°C (75.4°F)	20.4°C (68.7°F)	12.1°C (53.8°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 2021	23.3 mm (.9 in.)	41.4 mm (1.63 in.)	6.1 mm (.24 in.)	98.1 mm (3.86 in.)	19.4 mm (.76 in.)	34.2 mm (1.35 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.)
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Columbia River Temperature and Rainfall (Temp. from Station Castlegar A, B.C. Rain from Station Castlegar BCHA DA)

Month	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Temp. in 2021	17.3°C (63.1°F)	21.3°C (70.3°F)	30°C (86°F)	34.4°C (93.9°F)	27.5°C (81.5°F)	22.7°C (72.9°F)	12.5°C (54.5°F)
Average Daily Max. Temp. (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 2021	22.8 mm (.9 in.)	17.8 mm (.7 in.)	48.1 mm (1.9 in.)	1 mm (.04 in.)	60.5 mm (2.38 in.)	44.6 mm (1.76 in.)	77.2 mm (3 in.)
Average Rainfall (1981-2010)	50.2 mm (1.98 in.)	72.2 mm (2.84)	75.8 mm (2.98)	45.2 mm (1.78)	33.7 mm (1.33)	44.1 mm (1.74)	47.7 mm (1.87)

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

We fish the stretch of the upper Columbia River from its confluence with the Kootenay River down to where it crosses the Canada-U.S. Border. This tailwater fishery flows about 35 miles, with four distinct sections, so we have lots of water types to choose from. In 2021 our plan was to hit the water in early April and fish through June, hoping the Border would open and our American clients would join us. But the reality was that the Covid-19 closures were even more restrictive! Now one had to be a resident of the Kootenays to travel within our region! We did get out on the River a number of times to fish on our own, but had only a few guided trips with local anglers. So, the spring guiding season was basically a bust for us.

The Columbia River fished very well for rainbow trout in the spring (April-June). As per usual the fish had a lot of energy when hooked up. In the early part of the season the fish like to hold along the bank edges. As the flows rise and the river dynamics and related habitats change, the fish head into the big eddies to hold and feed. Therefore, we start the season fishing bank edges and runs, then follow the fish into the big eddies.

On one mid-May trip, the weather was beautiful and the rainbows were feeding aggressively in the eddies. It was apparent that the rainbows had wintered well with the majority of the fish being landed in the 18-21 inch range. The anglers had a great day landing 15-20 rainbows each, with a few double headers mixed in!

The flies working in Mid-May included; streamers of various colors, Purple Prince Nymphs, regular Prince Nymph's, Hare's Ear Nymphs and Pat's Rubber Legs. Certain dry flies, including small caddis, were producing well when the fish were up and feeding on the surface.

We fished the Columbia into the beginning of June. The fishing on the Columbia this spring was consistently very good. The anglers had good catch rates and the average sized fish was in the 17-21 inch slot. Bigger fish over 22 were landed with some awesome runs and jumps that came with them. While we fish the whole stretch of this piece of big water from the confluence with the Kootenay River down to the Border, we had some particularly productive days on the lower runs. In the spring this River gives us so many options to explore and we take full advantage of them with our rowable jet boat.

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

When we moved from the spring season over on the Columbia to guiding for cutthroats in the east Kootenays, the Covid-19 restrictions loosened, a bit. People from across B.C. and Alberta were now able to come and fish with us, but American anglers remained shutout. This created a lot of uncertainty for us and our American clients. Because how do you book a trip for peak season in July and August when you don't know if the Border will be open by then? This went on until the Border finally opened to U.S. drivers in early August.

The St.Mary River rounded into form early and fished exceptionally well from late June through July. While the Heat Dome brought high temperatures, it did not affect the fishing as it was so early in the season. By late July the hotter than usual summer weather was leading us to start our days earlier and we were off the water by around 3.00 p.m. On July 29th we received an order from the B.C. Fisheries Branch telling us we had to stop fishing by 2.00 p.m. to protect the fish against high water temperatures. As a result, our float trips on the St.Mary River were now running from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Elk, Bull Skookumchuck and other streams we fish were not subject to the 2 p.m. closure.

On the first trip to the St.Mary under the early start measure, the anglers were ready to go bright and early. They were rewarded as they got to dry fly fish the lower section for the whole day. The fishing was a little slow at the beginning, but it was like turning on a light once the sun beams started to penetrate deep into the water. It actually was very nice to be out on the water in the early morning during the dog days of summer. The fishing was very good on this day as the guys each caught and released upwards of 20 fish. The flies that were working best were the foam patterns. We used a couple of the new Chubby Chernobyl patterns from the shop that turned out to be the hottest flies in the valley!

As we moved into August the hot weather was still dominating until August 7th when we got the first of a couple days of rain. It was very welcomed as things had been very dry since the spring. On our August 8th "busman's holiday" to the Elk River the temperature topped out at a balmy 18°C (65°F) by the afternoon...what a change. With the recent break in the weather, the fish seemed a little fussy so we needed to cycle through the fly

box to find what they liked... which seemed to change all afternoon. So once again, it was to our advantage to have a wide selection of flies to draw from!

Later in the afternoon, we came around a bend in the Elk to see a bald eagle swooping down over a run on the River. We took the big bird's cue and started to work this section for a while. The rain was coming down hard now, but the fish were still up and feeding! When we presented the fly properly, getting a good drift, we could actually see the lips of the fish come up, break the water surface and take the fly! When we dragged and dropped the fly as we floated, some of the fish would jump out of the water to take it. What fun! As we continued down the Elk through each run the fish began taking the fly more and more aggressively!

By late in afternoon the fish were up feeding on midges, Blue Winged Olives and Pale Morning Duns, so there was plenty of bug action. On the afternoon, we caught and released around 20 cutthroat each. The average size was 13 to 15 inches and we released a couple in the 16 to 17 range! All the cutthroat were very healthy and aggressive.

What a fun day for Karen and I to do our annual August busman's holiday to the Elk! Life in this business can be rewarding, even in a Pandemic!

As August turned into September we were pleased to be hosting some of our American clients again. Had the Border not opened so late in the season we likely would have seen a lot more of them. All the rivers had benefited from the wetter than normal August and were fishing well. The 2 p.m. closure on the St.Mary was over. We fished the Elk and St.Mary rivers into the later part of September.

The temperatures in September were moderate as usual and the October Caddis, Blue Duns, Green Drakes and Mahogany Duns were emerging. It is a lot of fun to fish these classic patterns as they can be very productive for cutthroat. September is an awesome month to fish; the scenery, the hatches and open space make it fabulous!

Fall Fishing for Big Rainbows on the Upper Columbia River.

By the middle of September, we were back over fishing and guiding the upper Columbia River. Since the Border was now open, and people had enough time to plan, we had the fortune of guiding many of our American clients on the Columbia River again. In fact, we ended up having a very busy September with more interest than available days, so we were sold out.

On our September 26th daytrip things started off cool, but built to a comfortable temperature in the afternoon with only a few clouds, a nice day. We were fishing the lowest section of the River, putting in at Beaver Creek. We powered downriver till we spotted the top of a nice eddy, cut the motor and drifted in under the power of the oarsman. The anglers immediately started casting their lines toward the bank edge and out into the eddy.

On this day the anglers saw a lot of fish come to their flies as they managed to land between 10 to 15 rainbows each. The rainbows were in the 18-21 inch slot, with one 22 incher taking the angler into his backing. The fish were quite chunky after a season of feeding. The fight is always exhilarating with these trout as they jump and run, even the smaller guys fight hard!

The flies of choice included; Pat's Rubber Legs, a wide variety of colored streamers, sculpin patterns and an assortment of nymphs (Purple Prince, Regular Prince, Copper Johns), Blue Winged Olives, October Caddis and small midge patterns.

On October 24th we fished the Genelle Run on our final trip of the season. Using the jetboat we were able to power over most of the section. It is nice to have the options available that our jetboat provides us in terms of its roominess, comfort, rowing setup and the ability to go wherever the fish are. Our intent was to fish whatever technique was successful, be it streamer, nymph or dry. But our hope was to catch some fish feeding on the surface.

The afternoon brought out a nice hatch of Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis. So, the anglers were able to break out the dry fly setups and catch a few on the surface. It's so exciting to see these rainbows come up and slam a dry fly!

Over the course of the day the anglers landed 15 fish each with the average size in the 16 - 19 inch slot. They also landed a few rainbows over 20 inches that were very chunky and feisty, making for an exhilarating fight!

The flies used on this day varied based on the temperature and where the fish were feeding. We cycled through our "Columbia River" fly box in order to keep up with what the trout were attracted to. We used Blue Winged Olives, October Caddis, Prince Nymphs, Hare's Ears Nymph, Copper Johns and different colored streamers at different times of the day.... and they all drew action!

In general, this fall we enjoyed the great combination of nice weather, great fishing and enthusiastic anglers...what else can we ask for!

Hosted Trip to Christmas Island

Due to the Pandemic we were not able to host a group of anglers to Christmas Island in 2021. However, we are pleased to say we do have our local lodge booked from October 25th to November 1, 2022. If you have an interest in coming along to this exotic location for a trip of a lifetime, give us a shout at the flyshop to discuss the details!

So, there you have it, 2021, "The Year of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Take 2" is in the books! It was another challenging year for our business, but we survived it with the patronage of our loyal anglers, both local and from far away! We thank you all for your support. We hope 2022 will pose less of a challenge, but who knows for sure! Our hope

is to attend tradeshow in Colorado and New Jersey in late January and mid-February respectively. Call us for tickets if you are in either of these locations. If you are local, feel free to drop by the fly shop for a chat. If you are in the U.S. and beyond, call us at 1-800-667-2311 or contact us via our website, or Facebook, to discuss a booking for next year.

We would like to wish everyone a safe holiday season and good health in 2022.

Take care,

Kelly & Karen

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2021 Fishing Reports:

Report #17 (October 24, 2021)

The Columbia River has been great this fall!

We sure lucked out this fall, as the weather for fishing turned out to be pretty good. Usually by now we have had a few snow falls and cold weather down in the valley where the Columbia River flows. While we have had a cool mornings, the clothing nowadays makes it easy to dress for it. Lately the mornings have been starting off at around 4-6°C (40-43°F) heating up to around 15°C (60°F) by the afternoon. When you add these moderate temps to sunny skies, it makes for some lovely days on the River.

Given the cold mornings, there is no rush to be out on the water first thing. We usually meet the clients at their hotel and head out around 9 a.m. We are on the water by 10 and off by 5:30 p.m. The days are now noticeably short, but we make the most of the sunlight and warmth. But, then again, October is almost done.

Today we fished the Genelle Run, using the jetboat to power over most of the section. It is nice to have the options available that our jetboat provides us in terms of its ample size, comfort, rowing setup and the ability to go wherever the fish are.

The fishing started off slowly today, picking up as the day warmed up. The anglers landed fish using all three techniques; nymphing, throwing streamers and on the dry fly.

The afternoon brought out a nice hatch of Blue Winged Olives and October Caddis. So, they caught a few on the surface. It's so exciting to see these rainbows come up and slam a dry fly!

Over the course of the day the anglers landed 15 fish each with the average size in the 16 - 19 inch slot. They also landed a few over 20 inches that were very chunky and feisty, making the fight pretty exhilarating!

The Columbia River is currently running around 1,190 CMS (42,024 CFS). These levels are fairly low which gives us a lot of defined water that acts to concentrate the fish. These lower flows are helpful in finding where the rainbows are concentrated.

The flies we used varied based on the time of day. We cycled through our "Columbia" fly box in order to keep up with what the trout were attracted to. BWO's, October Caddis, Prince Nymphs, Hare's Ears Nymph, Copper Johns and different colored streamers all worked at different times during the day.

As always, we saw loads of bird life out on the Columbia today.

Well, this is pretty much the last week of guiding for us and our last Fishing Report for 2021. Soon we will be wrapping up another great season on the water.

Now we will have a little time for ourselves to get out and fish before the weather completely changes over to winter!

So, here's to another crazy year in the age of the Pandemic! We made it through!

Thanks to everyone who came out to fish in our backyard with us in 2021. We greatly appreciate your patronage which we never take for granted!

The fly shop in Cranbrook will remain open throughout the winter months with modified hours. If you wish to drop by, please check the website for opening hours.

Once Halloween is over, feel free to pop into the shop to see if anything interests you as the Holiday Season awaits.

All the best and thank you. See you all in 2022 if not before.

Tight Lines,

Kelly and Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS If we manage to attend any tradeshow's this offseason, we will let you know via social media.

Report #16 (October 10, 2021)

Columbia River Report: the colours are stunning and the fishing is great!

We are half way thru October over here on the Columbia River. So far, we have been on the water almost every day as the weather has been spectacular.

The Columbia River has been fishing quite well throughout our October stay. Today the anglers decided to head up to fish the Castlegar Run at the top of the system, putting in at the old ferry landing at Robson. The morning was been quite cool starting off at around 3°C (40°F), reaching a high of 14-15°C (57-60°F) by the afternoon.

Fall is in the air and winter is around the corner. All the leaves on the trees are bright orange and yellow now. It is absolutely beautiful out on the Columbia River. Southeastern B.C. is full of 'eye candy' as everything around is amazing to look at! And the rainbow fishing is not bad either!

To start, the anglers rigged up both nymph and streamer rods then they powered downstream. The flow in the Columbia is now low at 1,220 CMS (43,000 CFS), providing a lot of classic looking water that experience tells us where the fish are. But you still have to get them to eat the fly!

Today the guys systematically worked the water they fished. The rainbows this time of year are chunky and crazy fighters! They will jump and pull the line into the backing many times! Today the two anglers caught 15 rainbows each. Though the fishing was quite slow in the morning, as the air temperature warmed, things really turned on! Some days it takes a while for the fish to get active. Most of the rainbows caught and released today were in the 17 to 20-inch slot. That said, they did release a few in the 21 to 22-inch range. They were amazing, colorful rainbows with that bright red stripe down the side.

The nymphs worked well at times, as did the streamers. It can be challenging some days to figure out what the fish are eating, but when you dial into what they want, you can have a great day out here! That is why your fly box must have many different fly patterns so you can cycle through them systematically and figure it out!

The Columbia River patterns we use range in size from 8 to 14 nymphs and include; Purple Prince, Regular Prince, Hare's Ear, Copper Johns and Caddis nymphs. The popular streamers are the Sculpins, Black Leaches and Pat's Rubber Legs.

During today's outing they spotted a big black bear rambling down to the River to drink just below the bridge at Castlegar. They also saw a lot of bird life ranging from turkeys wondering along the riverbanks to eagles and ospreys high up in their nests. The merganser ducks were also spotted cruising along the banks looking to eat some fish. It was a really enjoyable day on the Columbia today!

We still have a couple more weeks of guiding left on the Columbia; up to the end of October. What a crazy year it has been! And now it looks like Canadians will be able to head south by vehicle crossing on November 8th Just in time for winter to hit.

Tradeshows:

We may be able to do some shows across the border this winter, so we will keep you posted on when and where.

As for fishing in the Kootenay region of B.C., you still can get outside while the weather remains good. The fish will be active later in the morning to early afternoon. So, yes, a shorter window of time, but it is nice to just get out!

Have a good one!

Tight Lines

Kelly and Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS Stop in the shop and we can tell you what is working at this time on whatever river you plan to fish in our area.

Report #15 (September 26, 2021)

Columbia River Report: the fall fishing is great!

It's been a very busy September as we have wrapped up guiding in the East Kootenays on the St.Mary and Elk rivers. We are now over on the Columbia River for most of October.

As we have had a lot of demand for our guided trips, but a limited number of guides, we are pretty much booked up this fall.

The days are now noticeably shorter and the cooler weather has crept in. You can now look towards the Rockies and see the snow covered peaks. Fall is definitely here and you can feel it as well as see it. But the coming of fall does not mean fishing is over by any means. On the contrary, the fishing remains awesome.

The rivers are still fishing very good, in particular the Elk. You do not have to get out there too early. Just wait till the day warms up at around 10 a.m. and then you can fish till 3 or 4 in afternoon.

You can still dry fly fish, but if it is a cool day with rain you may want to nymph. We always start off with dry flies first and only switch if we have to. You never know if the fish will come up for a Green Drake, Mahogany Dun or Blue Winged Olive, until you try.

The fishing on the Columbia River has been very productive so far. Today the guys were picked up at their hotel after breakfast and headed down to the bottom section of the Columbia putting in at Beaver Creek Provincial Park.

The weather was quite cool, starting off at around 7°C (45°F). By late in the afternoon the temperature had increased to 20°C (68°F). The sky saw some clouds and a little wind at times, all in all a decent fall day.

One plus to our jet boat is that we run under power until we spot a fine looking eddy, nice run or spot a pod of fish rising. Then we just shut down the motor and drift into place under the power of the oars. It's a really effective boat for fishing on the Columbia.

Today the boat was equipped with 3 different types of rod set ups, so we were ready to fish whatever opportunity presented itself!

On this outing the anglers started off with 9' 6", 6 or 7 weight rods, set up for nymphing and casting streamers.

Once the boat was in place, the guys casted their lines along the bank edges and out into the eddy.

Some days in the fall you can get lucky and spot rising trout. This is when we break out the dry fly rods. If you hook a rainbow trout on a dry fly in the Columbia at this time of year, all I can say is "hang on!"

Today the anglers saw a lot of fish come to their flies as they managed to land between 10 and 15 rainbows each. The fish are really chunky in the fall. They eat all summer long, gorging on the caddis to fatten up for winter! The fight is always exhilarating with these trout as they jump and run, even the smaller guys fight hard!

The average sized rainbow landed is 18-21 inches with the odd larger one showing up. Occasionally you hook up into a nice big guy out on the Columbia like they did today, as a nice 22 inch rainbow took the angler almost into his backing. The current in this river is huge, powerful and boiling at times, so it is such a rush when you couple that with a fish fighting hard on the end of your line!

The flies of choice included; Pat's Rubber Legs, a wide variety of colored streamers, sculpin patterns and an assortment of nymphs (Purple Prince, Regular Prince, Copper Johns), Blue Winged Olives, October Caddis and small midge patterns.

The wildlife out on the Columbia today included turkeys along the water's edge and eagles and ospreys up in their nests looking for their next meal. The osprey were actively diving down into the River for fish - so cool!

The flows in the Columbia River drop at this time of year. Today they were running at 1,520 cubic meters per second (53,700 cubic feet per

second). These lower flows create more structure in the River which can be good for finding fish.

On the Lakes

As for fishing activity on the lakes in Kootenay region, we are seeing more people heading out to them now. The cooler weather brings on the feeding fish on many of the lakes. Whitetail, Whiteswan, Echo and Premier lakes are just a few that are attracting a lot of fishers this fall.

On the lakes we recommend using balanced leeches, pumpkin leeches, the micro black leech, doc spratley, half backs, full backs, damsels, blobs and boobies. They all work. It is best to have a good selection of flies so you can cycle through them to find which ones work best on any given day.

The 2021 season is slowly coming to an end, but October can still be a great month to fish with the added bonus that there are not many people on the water.

So, get out when you can and enjoy the beautiful and amazing back country wherever you live!

Tight Lines

Karen

St.Mary Angler

Ps Stop by our Cranbrook fly shop for the latest news on what is working and where to fish.

Report #14 (September 15, 2021)

Fall is here and the fishing is outstanding!

September is a beautiful month in the Kootenays, with its spectacular fall colors and cool, crisp mornings. They say, summer goes by fast in this business. Well for us, when July 1st comes, in no time at all it seems the next day is fall! And the fall fishing has been outstanding.

The fall weather has really helped the fish remain feisty and strong as they gorge themselves before winter. The temperature over the last couple of weeks has been starting out at a nice and cool 8°C (47°F), reaching into the low 20's (70's°F) by the afternoons. The Rockies now have a dusting of snow on them making it a lovely time to be out on the rivers flyfishing.

On this particular day, the guys decided to float the Elk River from Fernie down to Morrissey. Blue Duns, Green Drakes and Mahogany Duns are all emerging now. It is fun to fish these classic patterns on the Elk River as they can be very productive for cutthroat. We hit the water by 9 a.m. and the day was sunny and beautiful.

The first fly in the mix was the Green Drake. After a slow start the fish were hitting the flies and the anglers landed between 15 and 20 brightly coloured cutthroat each over the day. The average fish was between 14 and 16 inches long. It's so exciting to see a nice sized cutthroat jump out of the water to drown the fly! They do prefer to take the fly sloooowly, so remember to let the fish take it, before you lift to set the hook.

The scenery on the Elk River is amazing with the Rockies right there in your face! Sometimes, the view will distract you from watching and mending your fly. But, when that happens you will soon here the guide chime in... "mend... mend!", as you are shaken out of your gaze!

Remember, you can't have any drag on your fly, or the fish will not look at it. The fly must float naturally long enough to fool the fish into eating it!

The flies cycled through today, in addition to the Duns and Drakes were; Caddis, Blue Winged Olives, Purple Haze, Fat Albert, Chubby Chernobyl ant and beetle patterns. Basically, all these artificials work well at this time of year.

There is lots of wildlife to see on the Elk. In addition to the birds, today they saw a black bear scurrying off into the bushes and a couple mule deer sipping water along the stream edge.

September is an awesome month to fish, so get out and explore the East Kootenays. From lakes, to rivers and streams this area has it all!

Kelly will be heading over to the Columbia River today as it is in great shape and the trout are feeding heavily. He will be there guiding till the middle of October. Fishing for the big rainbows on the Columbia River is always exciting!

As for the lakes in the East Kootenays, we have heard of a few people heading out to Whiteswan and Whitetail for some fall fishing. This time of year, the lakes start to 'turn on' again, so if you want to get out and camp before it gets too cold, these are a couple of places to do it.

Feel free to stop into the shop in Cranbrook for more advice on places you can go. There are many options for you to choose from and we can help you decide where to go or how to fish them.

Tight Lines,

Karen

St.Mary Angler

Ps Call us today at 1-800-667-2311 to book a fall trip on the Columbia River!

Report #13 (August 31, 2021)

The water has cooled down, but the fishing has picked up!

The water temperature in the St. Mary River has now cooled right down as the weather has cooled off. The mornings are now quite brisk starting off at around 8°C (47°F), building to a high of 24°C (75°F) in the late afternoons. So, the recent lifting of the time closures on the rivers on August 26th was appropriate and welcomed.

In addition to the recent cooling trend in the Kootenays, we have had rain on and off. These factors have really helped suppress the wild fires and cool our streams. So, we are happy the weather is back to what it is normally like for this time of year.

Our floats are also back to their regular start times as we pick up clients and get out on the water by 9:30 a.m.

Today our destination was the Canyon section on the St. Mary River – from Wycliffe down to Sophie's takeout near the Mission. The flow in the St. Mary has risen about a foot after the recent rain and the fish are more active and maybe even happier as well!

The approach today had the anglers fishing along the bank edges, behind rocks and beside log jams in an effort to pull up some hungry trout. It was like these fish had not seen a fly in a long time!

During the float the anglers landed 20 cutthroat each, ranging from 12 to 16 inches in length. They also landed a number of cut-bows at around 17 inches. One hybrid was 19 inches, healthy and strong. It jumped many times before it was landed and released.

The flies that worked best today included the Chubby Chernobyl, Fat Albert, Stimy Chew Toy, caddis patterns and Parachute Adams. Like we always say, you need a variety of flies to cycle through when you

are out on the water. One day a fly is “lights out” and the next day it’s another, so you have to be prepared to cycle through your fly box.

On the float today, the guys came across a lot of wildlife. This included deer along the bank edges and a good-sized group of turkeys down closer to the take-out near the St. Eugene Mission. The turkeys were grazing heavily on the abundant grasshoppers along the banks, happy as clams! This was in addition to a wide variety of birds, from raptors to songbirds.

This is the time of year we start to see bears moving along the rivers. The kokanee are now starting to move up into the streams to commence spawning. The bears will be gorging themselves on the kokanee in preparation for their time in hibernation this winter.

The clients really enjoyed the scenery, as well as the fishing today. The River at this time of year is spectacular as the leaves turn colour and the whole mood of the River changes.

We have had many clients from the U.S. making their way up here to fish in the last few weeks. It is nice to see some normalcy again. Let’s hope the 4th wave of Covid does not knock us back to square one!

If you are in the Cranbrook area, please stop by the fly shop. You can find out how each river is fishing, what fly patterns are working and peruse all the flies and accessories to make your fishing experience a success.

Get out and enjoy the fall fishing as the weather is awesome and the fish are biting!

Tight Lines,

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

Ps Call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a fall trip on the Columbia River!

Report #12 (August 25, 2021)

The Heat Related Stream Closures are Over!

As of August 26th, the 2 p.m. closer due to high water temperatures will be lifted. This means that anglers can now continue to fish after 2 p.m.

The restriction was put in place on July 29th due to high stream temperatures. Recent rain and cooler weather have brought stream temperatures down into an acceptable range.

The closure had effected the St Mary River, Michel Creek, Sand Creek, Goat River, etc.

So go fish!

Karen

St.Mary Angler

Report #11 (August 11, 2021)

The Bull River has it all!

Today the smoke moved into the low-lying areas around Cranbrook and Kimberley. So, we decided to go towards the mountains to float the Bull River. This turned out to be a wise move as the skies were much clearer near the mountains.

The day started early as we headed up to fish on this scenic little river! The temperature in the morning started off at 10°C (50°F) and it warmed up nicely to around 28°C (82°F) in the late afternoon.

As we drove toward the put-in we spooked a mother whitetail deer and her 2 fawns. They ran down the road in front of us then deeked into the bush. And then just before our destination, another whitetail and set of fawns popped out of the bush and ran down the road again. It's so cool to see all this new life around us!

This trip was dry fly setups only. As soon as we hit the water we started to cast along the bank edges and behind the boulders. The Bull River runs pretty fast and has a lot of rocks to maneuver around, so the guides have to be on the oars all the time! When a fish is hooked on this River, the guide has to find a spot to pull over and drop an anchor so the angler can land the fish. So there is always lots of action on these floats.

Today the cutthroat trout were up and feeding aggressively. In terms of flies, the trout were mostly drawn to foam patterns such as; Fat Alberts Hoppers and Chernobyl Ants of different colors. They also hit the H&L Variants, Sparkle Caddis, Purple Haze, Parachute Adams and Stimulators - in Orange or Yellow.

During the float the anglers caught and released around 20 fish each, mostly in the 12 to 15-inch slot. That said, they did land a few cuts in the 16 to 17 range. All the cutthroat trout were healthy and vibrantly coloured and fought well.

The Bull River is in such a beautiful setting. It flows down from the mountains, through a canyon and eventually meets up with the Kootenay River. It is absolutely gorgeous country, pure eye candy.

Bringing anglers up into this area always has an element of true adventure for everyone. Some of our clients love this River so much, they fish it every time they visit us.

The wildlife is abundant up on the Bull, from the deer and bears to the birds. Coupled with the scenery and fishing it creates a true wilderness adventure.

Just a reminder that if you are heading out to fish in this amazing part of the back country, be sure to know the regulations before you go.

If you would like to know what flies are working on the rivers in our area before you head out, visit us in the fly shop before you go and we will help you out.

We have been seeing some of our American clients now as they can cross the border. As long as they have both Covid-19 vaccine shots and a negative Covid-test before crossing, they are welcome into Canada. They are happy to come to British Columbia and we are very happy to see them!

August is moving right along now so get out into the backcountry and fish.

Tight Lines,

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

Ps drop into the fly shop, or call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a trip today!

Report #10 (August 8, 2021)

Elk River Report; what guides do on their day off.

We have been waiting and waiting and finally we got rain yesterday and today! It's exactly what we need, a couple of days of constant rain!

Our destination today was the Elk River. The temperature in the morning was a cool 13°C (55°F) and warming up to a balmy 18°C (65°F) by the afternoon...what a change.

Today was our annual "busman's holiday" to the Elk River. As Karen and I were working in the morning, we did not get onto the Elk until just after lunch. Our plan was to dump the raft over the bank and float down to the Morrissey takeout. As soon as we started the float, the rain began! And, oh how we really wanted that rain!

On the float we changed flies multiple times in search of a dry that that would produce more than a couple of fish. This went on throughout the day. As floating and drifting the fly was not working early on, we stopped and fished the runs. This is what we did to fool the fish at the beginning of our float...

The foam patterns were working best including the; Chubby Chernobyl, Fat Albert, Purple Haze, Stimy Chew Toy, as well as the smaller patterns like the Swisher Caddis, Adams and ants/beetles.

Like I said, we needed to cycle through the fly box to find what they liked, and believe me it changed all afternoon. So once again, it was to our advantage to have a wide selection of flies to draw from.

Later in the afternoon, we came around a bend in the Elk to see a bald eagle swooping down over a run on the River. So, we took its cue and thought this would be a good section to work for a while. The rain was coming down harder now, but the fish were still up and feeding! When we presented the fly properly, getting a good drift, we could actually see the lips of the fish come up, break the water surface and take the fly! When we dragged and dropped the fly as we floated, some of the fish would jump out of the water to take it. What fun! As we continued

down the Elk through each run the fish began taking the fly more and more aggressively!

By late in afternoon the fish were up feeding on midges, Blue Winged Olives and Pale Morning Duns, so there was plenty of bug action. On the afternoon, we caught and released around 20 cutthroat each. The average size was 13 to 15 inches and we released a couple in the 16 to 17 range! All the cutthroat were very healthy and aggressive.

What a fun day on our annual busman's holiday to the Elk! Life in this business can be rewarding!

As for the reopening of the Canada/U.S. border, we received our first Americans in the fly shop. It was great to see their faces!

As long as Americans have all their paper work showing both Covid-19 shots, and a negative Covid test in the 72 hour window before arriving in Canada, they are good to get in. [Click here for more details.](#)

It is wonderful to see the Pandemic starting to come to an end...what a crazy year we have had! Let's hope we learn something from it all!

If you do plan on coming up from the U.S. to fish with us, we are waiting to welcome you!

Take care and Tight Lines,

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

Ps call us at 1-800-667-2311 to book a trip, or discuss your fishing options with us.

Report #9 (July 29, 2021)

St.Mary River Report; Partial Closure Now in Effect.

While some of you may know, the St. Mary River is now closed to fishing from 2 p.m. to midnight each day due to elevated water temperatures. This closure is to remain in effect until September 15th. This applies from the mouth of St.Mary Lake all the way down to the confluence with the Kootenay River. The portion above the mouth of the Lake is not subject to this closure.

We had already started fishing earlier in the day, ending by around 3, but now we must stop fishing by 2. We support this closure as the River is definitely warming up in the afternoon. We know this may be an inconvenience to some anglers who desire a more conventional start, but the health of the fish comes first. This approach will mean the fish will stay deep in the River and not be bothered during the hottest part of the day. Hopefully, when we see some precipitation and things cool down, the Ministry will revisit the closure.

Therefore, our float trips on the St.Mary River are now running from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. This allows anglers on our floats to have a full day on the water.

If a 6 a.m. start is too early for you, we still have days available on the Bull and Elk rivers that run regular hours.

On this first day of the closure we had four guys go out early and it worked out great! They fished the lower section of the Mary and dry fly fished the whole day.

The fishing was a little slow at the beginning, but it was like turning on a light switch shortly after as the fish woke up. It actually was very nice to be out on the water in the early morning during this Province-wide heatwave. The cooler air is a welcome addition to the mornings - as the temperature has been reaching highs of 36°C (97°F) in the late afternoon... now that's hot!

The anglers appreciated how serene it was early in the day on the St.Mary. It seems to be one of the most magical times to be on the water, fully enveloped by nature!

The fishing was very good today as the guys each caught and released upwards of 20 fish.

One angler was a beginner fly fisher and commented on how much he appreciated being on the guided trip. He said, if he had fished the Mary on his own he would have fished all the wrong spots! He did not realize that the warmer weather has shifted the fish into different habitats where the water is cool and well oxygenated.

The flies that were working best were the foam patterns. We have a couple new Chubby Chernobyl patterns in the shop that are hands down the hottest flies in the valley! So, come check them out.

Getting on the water early in the morning allowed the anglers to see many different species of wildlife starting their day. They saw many deer and their fawns drinking along the bank edges and loads of bird life.

All in all, everyone seems to understand the rationale behind the closure and we, as a business, will roll right along with latest punch!

Come into the shop in Cranbrook if you need assistance in getting set up so you can get out and enjoy the great fishing venues of the East Kootenays.

If you have a trip booked with us and want to discuss your timing options, or even change the river you are going to be fishing, give us a call at the shop at 1-800-667-2311.

We have options!

Take care and Tight Lines,

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

Ps stop by our fly shop to check out our excellent selection of flies and accessories.

Report #8 (July 19, 2021)

The Border is Reopening Soon... and the Fishing is Fine!

Well, as everyone has likely heard the Canada/U.S. border will be [reopening to American](#) anglers on August 9th, 2021.

Wow, can you believe it? The Border is reopening and there is still enough time for Americans to come summer holiday in B.C.!

The timing is right as the fishing has been quite good this past week and it will only get better as we move forward.

The weather has also been pretty good with daily temperatures starting out at 16°C (61°F) and reaching the low 30's°C (86°F) by mid afternoon.

The smoke from fires from around the Province, Montana and Washington State is travelling in and out of our area. One day it is clear blue skies and the next smoky. We just need some rain!

Now that the summer heat has arrived, we are starting our float trips earlier in the day. The early start is cooler for us and finishing by 4.00 in the afternoon is easier on the fish. We are also focused on reeling in and releasing fish quickly to reduce their stress.

Today we floated the Elk River down to the Morrissey Bridge. The Elk is shaping up nicely, dropping and clearing every day. The anglers only used dry flies today in an effort to entice the cutthroats to the surface.

The fishing started with a bang as a cutthroat grabbed a foam fly and took off with it! After that the fishing was steady. A couple cutthroats took the fly right along a log jam and almost got off.

The angler managed to lay the rod low and pull the fish around the structure to save his fly and land the fish... nice work!

The average sized cutthroat landed on the Elk today was a little smaller than usual, between 11 and 14 inches. That said, they did catch a few nice fish up to 16. The cuts provided to be a lot of fun throughout the day as the anglers landed around 15 fish each.

It was a day that required a lot of switching up of different patterns to find the one that would work for a while. Getting the right fly is important, but making sure the fly floats naturally with zero drag is also critical to fooling the cuts of the Elk on the surface. The best producing flies included; Fat Alberts, Purple Haze, Chernobyl Ants, Stimulators and Sparkle Caddis.

There was a lot of active bird life on the Elk today. The most noteworthy were the ospreys and eagles hovering around their nests of chicks! Nice to see.

The rivers in our area are all in great shape now. When coming to the Cranbrook area, drop into the fly shop and check out our extensive assortment of flies. We have everything you need for your dry fly adventure!

July is almost done so get out there and enjoy the backcountry and stay fire safe.

And to our American anglers...see you soon, for real this time!

Tight lines

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

Ps call us at 1-800-667-2311 about booking a float trip this summer and into the fall.

Report #7 (July 6, 2021)

St.Mary River Report; lots of cutthroat trout are being caught on the dry!

It's the first week of July and the rivers are shaping up nicely. The St.Mary River has been dropping daily and has completely cleared up. The Elk is also dropping and clearing up steadily, as are the Bull and Skookcumchuck rivers. Things are rounding into form.

Presently we are focused on the St Mary River, guiding it daily with our eager clients!

The guides are still running two sections of the Mary on each float, as the flow is still moving along fairly quickly. Today the guys floated from Wycliffe down to the confluence with the Kootenay River.

The temperatures started out elevated at 25°C (77°F) and reached a high of 35°C (95°F) by mid-afternoon. The skies were blue and the scenery was absolutely beautiful. Thunderclouds formed in the afternoon and by later in the evening a storm had cruised through. It's very warm for this time of year!

The anglers dry fly fished all day with their 4 and 5 weight rods setup with dry lines and 9-foot leaders. During the day they hooked into many wild Westslope Cutthroats, as well as a few cut-bows. The cut-bows always jump like crazy no matter their size. So, if you hook one of these fish on the surface it is a great rush! They averaged 20 fish apiece with the average size in the 13 to 15 inch class.

Fishing big terrestrial patterns at this time of year is so much fun. You cast upstream, mend the line so you have no drag on the fly, then give it a pop on the surface to look like it is jumping around. The cutthroats can't refuse these bugs as they look so realistic... just like a stone fly!!

The anglers used a wide variety of flies including; Stimuli Chew Toys, Foam Patterns, Chernobyl Ants, Fat Alberts (in red, black or tan), Purple Haze, Royal Wulffs, Parachute Adams and Caddis patterns.

The guys spent most of their time fishing the runs, behind rocks and along the bank edges. At the lunch spot the guys needed to cool down so they jumped in the water for a swim, and that did the trick. You definitely need to hydrate and cool yourself down in this weather.

The wildlife along the St. Mary River is abundant now with deer and their fawns roaming the bank edges and lots of bird life. The ospreys are now busy in their nests with their chicks and seem to pick the best fishing holes as their territory.

We are already cruising into summer so make sure to get out and fish and enjoy the backcountry as much as possible.

Before you head out to fish your favorite stream in our corner of B.C., drop into our flyshop in Cranbrook to check out the latest products. Also, be sure to ask what is working on the various rivers and streams as we have a lot of knowledge to go along with a wide selection of flies to improve your chances of success.

As for our American clients, we miss you and hopefully the borders will open soon. We should hear more on July 21 when the current regulations are revisited. We are still in Stage 3 of the B.C. reopening plan and we will let you know right away if anything changes.

See you on the water soon.

Tight lines

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS Stay cool!

Report #6 (June 27, 2021)

The St.Mary River is fishing very well, as things heat up across B.C.

Well, summer is here with a bang! Currently B.C. is trapped under a 'Heat Dome' as we have been experiencing temperatures as high as 49°C (120°F). Crazy I tell you!!!

As a result of the heat the rivers are now dropping daily and clearing up fast!

The guys floated the St Mary River today to look for new channels and bars, as well as to check out the fishing quality. They floated from the Pumphouse down to Sophie's, which is a double section. They started early to avoid the midday heat.

They rigged up for dry fly fishing with big stone fly patterns including; Orange Stimulators, Purple Haze, foam patterns, Fat Alberts, Caddis

patterns and Yellow Sallies. You know, a few of the awesome flies you want to have in your fly box!

With the rods at the ready, the guys climbed into the raft and began their float. They immediately started casting along the bank edges, behind rocks and into the nice flowing runs.

The cutthroats were very active and hungry from the start. On the St.Mary, if you cast your fly line and then mend it right of way so it does not drag, the cutties will come up and eat the fly all the time!

On the float they landed about 30 fish between the two of them. The average size was 12-14 inches in length, but they did land a few in the 17-18 inch class. The cutthroats looked very healthy and strong as they have wintered well.

During the float the guys did stop and get out of the boat a few times to fish up the back channels. The cutthroats are now searching out their summer homes after returning from spawning. So, if you find some fish in the River at this time, the chances are you will find a lot of them still hanging out in that hole!

In terms of the wildlife on the St.Mary today, they saw some deer with their fawns coming down to the water to drink. And there were all kinds of ducks and birds congregating along the bank edges.

So, all in all, the River is looking and fishing fabulous right now!

Over on the Elk River, the flow has been dropping and clearing up steadily as well. So, the fishing will be improving every day now as we move into summer conditions.

Remember when you go out in this heat to stay hydrated. Start your fishing early in the mornings when it is cool. And, like the guys did today, feel free to dip your hat in the water to cool off on occasion.

If it stays this hot we may have to start early and stop fishing in the early afternoon and then head back out in the evening.

B.C. is now in Step 3 of their Covid 19 Restart Plan, which includes 'Canada wide recreational travel.' Hopefully, we will hear more about the Canada-U.S. border reopening on July 22.

Take care and see you out on the water,

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS Stay cool and play safe!

Report #5 (June 19, 2021)

All the Rivers are now Open!

With June 15th arriving, all the small streams and rivers in Region 4 are now open to fishing, so here we go again! Many people have been anxiously awaiting this day to get out and walk a bank edge of their favorite river! Unfortunately, the day before opening on the St.Mary, we had a big storm up the valley so flows went up and the water turned to chocolate milk. So we will have to wait a few days for things to calm down.

We have not seen terribly high peak flows in this spring's freshet. The snow in the high country has melted steadily which has meant no topping of the banks.

The Elk River is also currently quite dirty. That said, the rivers are clearing up and dropping everyday. We expect conditions to clear up in the next week and the fishing to be very good after that.

In terms of the local lakes, some are still fishing well. Whiteswan Lake in particular is experiencing very good fishing. We were out there for a couple of days of fun fishing and camping recently. We cruised out on the Lake and fished along the drop of ledges. We anchored the boat with the wind at our backs, fishing in about 15ft of water. We added an indicator and swivel to our chironomids to get them down to the required depth.

The weather was absolutely beautiful and the scenery is really spectacular at Whiteswan. The fishing was quite good as we landed about 15 fish between the two of us in a couple of hours of fishing each day. The fish were very healthy, a few of them jumped and they all tugged hard on the line.

The producing flies included Chromies, small green chironomids (size 16-18), gun metal chironomids, as well as the Doc Spratley, black or green leech patterns and dragon flies.

The wildlife on the Lake only enhances the experience on Whiteswan with eagles in their nests, loons cruising along the shore edges looking for their next meal and deer coming down to sip the cool mountain waters. You may think you are in a beer commercial!

Many people were out on the Whiteswan Lake enjoying the weather and water. We saw everything from paddle boarding to kayaking, in addition to the fishing.

This week coming the temperatures are going to be very hot, with many record highs to be broken. We are told to expect heat in the high 30's°C to low 40's°C (95-105°F), and we will likely see the end of our cool nights.

Just make sure before you head out to include a hat, sun protection and lots of water in your kit. Sun stroke can happen quickly, so be prepared.

We will be checking out the St. Mary River over the upcoming week and will let you know how the fishing is. If you are in the Cranbrook area, stop by our fly shop to discuss the status of the rivers and lakes and how to fish them at this time of year.

The Canada/U.S. Border

With the threat of Covid 19 lingering, the mask and distancing restrictions remain in effect for now and the Canada/U.S. border likely remains closed to people traveling for recreation until July 22nd, when it will be revisited.

We realize the border closure is very frustrating to our American clients and we miss you greatly! But hang in there as the border reopening is on the horizon! Please get vaccinated ASAP because we are hearing it will be a condition of entry into Canada for some time. We are told it is a great defence against the virus, especially the variants. We also understand that it is very likely that people will only be allowed into Canada 14 days after they are fully vaccinated. The Government of Canada has designed an App called "ArriveCAN" for travelers to Canada to electronically upload proof and date of vaccination, etc.

The opening of the border is definitely on the horizon and we look forward to welcoming you back into Canada soon! When the conditions of entry into Canada are announced by the Canadian Government, we will post a link for your review. You can read the news releases on travel conditions from the Government of Canada by clicking this [link](#)

Take care and see you out on the water,

Tight Lines

Karen and Kelly

St.Mary Angler

PS Stay safe, we are almost through this thing!

Report #4 (June 4, 2021)

The Spring Freshet is in Full Swing and Summer is Now Within sight!

We are inching closer and closer to June 15th, the opening day for all the rivers and small streams in our East Kootenay Region. With this in mind we are also getting closer to the Canada/U.S. Border reopening...or so we hope!

The Rivers are now in full freshet. They are big, brawling and dirty brown as we speak! A lot of debris; logs and rocks are rolling downstream plowing new runs and routes as the runoff continues. Remember to stay clear of the watercourses now, they are not safe.

Hopefully the freshet will be well on its way to completion in a couple of weeks. Once the rivers drop and clear, we will be ready to get out to dry fly fish!

The lakes in our area are still producing well overall. Depending on the day and the lake, the fishing can be quite good!

Whether you have a boat or not, there are many lakes you can fish. Stop by our Cranbrook fly shop and we will let you know the latest on how each lake is fishing, and what flies you need to catch a few! The fishing conditions are changing all the time, so information is an important element that we can provide you in advance of your trip.

The Columbia River:

We are in the process of finishing up the spring fishing season on the Columbia River. Again this year, the spring season has been outstanding!

This last week we have enjoyed above normal temperatures. This morning started off at 12°C (54°F), but by later in the afternoon it reached an amazing temperature of 39°C (102°F), now that is hot! We were thankful there were a few clouds in the sky to block out the sun at times!

We put the boat in at the Gyro Park launch in Trail. We floated downstream, fishing from run to run, in addition to testing the eddies in the morning. In the afternoon we headed back upstream. The fishing was pretty good in the morning, but by midafternoon it was fantastic!

The guys landed about 15 rainbows each. Most of them in the 17 to 19 inch slot, but a few in the 20-22 inch class were hooked and released. It was crazy fun times as these fish really like to run, jump and fight! When they first hit, you just can't tell whether you have hooked a big guy, or a small one. They are all so feisty!

On this trip we decided to use the smaller Czech nymphs to see how they would produce, in addition to a few Caddis emerger patterns. Both types of patterns worked quite well.

There were a few caddis hatches early in the day, but as things really heated up, nothing was happening. I guess it was too hot to hatch!

The Columbia River is running very high right now. This means the boat's pilot must be on constant alert for floating debris. Logs, big and small, floating downstream can be very dangerous and appear very quickly in your field of view.

At this time of year there is a lot of wildlife to be seen on the River. Be it eagles and osprey, ducks, turkeys or swallows you will not be

disappointed in the bird life. In addition, deer and bear are frequent visitors to the shoreline.

Travel Restrictions:

We are hearing more positive news about the Canada/U.S. border reopening soon. There are a lot of political leaders calling for both the Canadian and American governments to reopen the border for vaccinated travellers. Hopefully we will hear something positive on June 22nd when the latest restrictions will be revisited. So, get yourself ready to travel again.

In the meantime, travel restrictions within B.C. will end on June 15th.

For those of you in our area, feel free to come into the fly shop and check out all the new products and flies we have in stock.

Summer fishing it is right around the corner and you want to be prepared!

Stay Safe and Tight Lines!

Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS PS You can call us directly at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss available dates or book a summer float.

Report #3 (May 25, 2021)

The Lakes are Fishing Well and the Columbia River is Producing lots of nice Rainbows Now!

Spring fishing has been very good so far this year. The lakes around the East Kootenay region have been producing steadily for those able to get out on the water. The high-quality fishing, coupled with the forced isolation of the Pandemic, has meant people are extremely eager to head out to fish and camp.

Some of our lakes can be very hard to figure out, but with persistence and a little planning, you can almost always catch a couple fish. Here are some ideas to increase the odds.

When you go out fishing it is always a good idea to have a few patterns in your fly box so you can try multiple flies, and techniques, to fool the fish.

It is always a good idea to cruise around the lake and try to spot fish in the shallows, before you settle in.

Once you do spot some fish, anchor your boat and measure the water's depth so you can build your leader and drop your chironomid about a foot off the bottom.

If you are fishing with someone, have them try a balanced leech on the end of their line while you run a chironomid. It is always advisable for each angler to have different flies on.... at least until you understand what the fish are biting!

Right now, dragon flies are working really well on a sinking line. Remember to cast towards the shore and strip your line back in slowly, when fishing this setup.

In addition to the above advice, feel free to stop into our fly shop and we will be happy to let you know what flies are working now. We can also give you an update on how the local lakes are fishing. Presently; Premier, Whiteswan, Whitetail, Moose, Echo and Lazy Lake, are all producing fish.

That said, the chironomid hatches have only been lasting for a couple of hours a day. So be aware that you will have to fish different methods at this time of year to have success. And the usual caveats apply on the lakes in the spring; 'each day is different' and while 'one lake can be amazing one day, it can be very tough the next'.

The Columbia River:

Over on the Columbia River in the West Kootenay region of Southeastern B.C., the fish have been very active!

The weather has been a bit wild the last few days with storms rolling through bringing wind, rain and hail! But that's spring!

The nice thing is that these spring storms usually only last for short periods and don't seem to negatively impact the fishing.

Over the last few days the temperature in the morning has started off at around 8°C (46°F) climbing up towards 20°C (68°F) by the afternoon.

It is always a good idea to wear layers in the spring so you can take them off, and put them back on, as the weather dictates. You do not want to get a chill when out on the water!

We have been putting the boat in at Beaver Creek and fishing the lowest section of the Columbia before it crosses the International Border. There are many nice back eddies and runs in this stretch of the River that produce a lot of feeding fish.

Today the two anglers caught and released around 30 rainbow trout between them, which is an awesome day for the Columbia!

The average sized rainbow caught was in the 17-20 inch range. They netted a very nice 22-inch rainbow that jumped and tugged on the line providing the angler with a great fight!

On this day, the guys fished mostly nymphs, with the occasional streamer tossed in. The nymphs used included; Prince, Hare's Ear and Copper John (sized 12-14). The streamers were in white, black or green (sized 8-12).

But when the caddis are hatching... look out as the dry fly fishing will be on!

The wild life on the Columbia never gets old as there is so much bird life to be seen. Eagles and ospreys overhead. The young in the nests. Ducklings feeding in the eddies. The place is packed with wildlife!

End to Travel Restrictions in B.C.:

On June 16th, the ban on recreational travel throughout the Province of B.C. is over. We are also hearing rumours that the U.S. may unilaterally open the border in late June, but we are not hearing anything about Canada's response. So, who knows for sure. But the border reopening is coming, hopefully sooner than later.

If you are looking at booking a trip on our rivers this summer, give us a call.

Stay Safe and Tight Lines!

Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS You can call us directly at 1-800-667-2311 to book a float this summer.

Report #2 (May 17, 2021)

Spring is in Full Swing and the Fishing is Great!

The month of May is cruising along and the fishing in the East Kootenay region of B.C. has been excellent. The warmer weather is generating abundant food sources for the fish, so all the lakes are now producing very well.

Over the last few days the terrestrial insects have been showing themselves with the black ant hatch coming off, as well as the dragon and damsel flies appearing alongside the lake edges. That said, chironomids, balanced leeches, blobs and booby flies are all still working well. Things come on strong in May producing many choices for the fish to feed on and lots of options for anglers to imitate.

With the warmer weather this past week we are now seeing the spring freshet building on the rivers. The rivers are now rising every day, even if the weather service is calling for snow high up in the mountains this weekend. We never know what weather we will face come spring time, but spring is indeed here!

The Columbia River has been fishing very well during the month of May. This past week the weather was beautiful and the rainbow trout were feeding aggressively. The Columbia's rainbows have wintered well with the majority of fish being landed in the 18-21 inch range. One day last week the guys landed 15- 20 fish each with a few double headers mixed in!

The flies working these days include; streamers of various colors, Purple Prince Nymphs, regular Prince Nymph's, Hare's Ear Nymphs and Pat's Rubber Legs. Certain dry flies, including small caddis, are producing well when the fish are feeding at the surface.

The wildlife was everywhere to be seen on the Columbia River today. There were lots of eagles, osprey, merganser ducks and Canada geese. The guys even saw an eagle swoop down on a group of young ducklings. Fortunately, the ducklings dove under the water to take cover. They also saw a huge sturgeon swim under the boat while rowing through one of the back eddies, so prehistoric looking! At one

point they noticed a beaver come out of its home and dive into the water. What an amazing day for wildlife!

We have been launching the boat from Gyro Park at Trail and jetting upriver to the prime locations where we row the eddies. The flows on the Columbia are now starting to come up due to the building freshet and the subsequent release of water from the dam. So, just a reminder that you must always be aware of wood debris and logs on the water when out in a boat on the Columbia as the flows build.

We are hearing that the Covid-19 restrictions are going to start to be lifted next week. Hopefully there is a plan to reopen the Canada/US border sometime in the near future as well. Until then, stay healthy everyone!

If you are in and around the Cranbrook area feel free to stop into our fly shop to check out our merchandise and wide selection of flies. We can also give you information on how the lakes are fishing and where you can head out to explore!

Stay Safe and Tight Lines!

Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS Feel free to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to discuss the latest news around Covid-19 travel restrictions and booking a float this summer.

Report #1 (May 11, 2021)

The Spring Fishing Report

Welcome to spring! That's the good news... the other is that we are still facing restrictions due to the Covid-19 Pandemic...yuk!

That said, the fish are not affected by the Pandemic and they have been feeding heavily. This means the fishing has been amazing out here in southeastern British Columbia. Presently, Premier, White Swan and Whitetail lakes are all producing nice sized rainbow trout.

The month of April started off warm, and the low elevation lakes responded by icing off early. The rest of the lakes at higher elevations are now icing off as I write.

May is when everything starts to hatch on the lakes of southeastern B.C. So, in addition to the regular chironomids you may be using like Rick's Prom Midge, Gun Metals and Chromies, get out your balanced leeches in black, maroon, green and brown! These will all produce well at this time of year.

When the air temperatures rise and the sun is shining, black ants will start to hatch in big numbers. This will be in addition to the callibaetis that will also start coming off nicely.

When you first hit the water, you want to do a little exploration before settling in to fish. Take a few minutes to cruise around and along the drop-off ledges to see if the fish have moved into the shallows. Once you see some fish cruising you want to anchor your boat on both ends, just near or over top of the drop-off ledge. You then need to measure the depth of water so you can build your leader and tippet section so it extends to 1 foot above the bottom. The leader and tippet can be anywhere from 8 and 20 feet long depending on your depth. First you put on an indicator then run your line down to a swivel which acts like a weight. Below the swivel you run another 18" of tippet to the Chironomid or Balanced Leach.

If you don't want to anchor up, you can also troll a leach, which can be very effective as well.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions right now, people in British Columbia are only allowed to travel within the three designated travel regions.

So, make sure you are aware of this before you travel, or you can be stopped and fined by the RCMP. You can find out all the [details of the travel restrictions here](#).

This spring we fished on the Kootenay River for Bull Trout and the fishing was outstanding. Unfortunately, as the runoff has come on recently, the Kootenay River is now blown out. While it remains 'open', along with the Columbia River, all the small streams in Region 4 are closed due to runoff and cutthroat spawning from April 15th to June 15th. So please check out the [regulations](#) before you go fishing.

Columbia River Update:

Kelly and Brandon are now over on the Columbia River checking out the fishing and they report it is producing well. The flies that usually work well for us in May are the Prince Nymphs, Hare's Ear Nymph, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Pat's Rubber Legs, Sculpin's and Steamers.

Because of the regulations restricting travel within the three designated regions, we are not doing any guided trips for anglers from outside of our area until the restrictions are lifted.

While travel is restricted, everyone should try to get out and enjoy the outdoors! Spring is here and the fishing is great!

Re-Opening of the Canada-U.S. Border:

We are hopeful that the Canada-U.S. border will reopen soon. We recently read that the U.S. Senate Majority Leader is calling on Canadian and U.S. officials to release their plans to safely reopen the border to non-essential travel. This is a positive move as we are really looking forward to seeing our U.S. friends again!

If you are from Cranbrook, or anywhere in Southeastern B.C., stop in at our Fly Shop when passing by. We have lots of ideas of where to

fish and what flies and gear you will need to catch them. We will help you prepare for any fishing trip you have in mind.

Stay Safe and Tight Lines!

Karen

St.Mary Angler

PS Feel free to call us at 1-800-667-2311 to touch base with us as the restrictions around Covid-19 change.