

Valley Angler  
Drakes and not the cupcakes!  
by Bill Thompson

For a lot of anglers June is a lot like Christmas. It only comes once a year and it brings a lot of joy. In case you were wondering why, you probably don't fish. At least in our neck of the woods, June is by far the best fishing month; everything comes together to provide the "perfect storm" of events for the fisherman.

What makes June so special to me is the bugs. No, not the black flies and mosquitoes, but the mayflies. Right now sitting on my fly tying bench are no less than five different species of mayflies that I have been trying to identify. Just about every morning we are able to collect samples from the hatch the night before. The spiders have been most helpful in providing the perfect nets in which to catch them. Aside from the help from the spiders I am sometimes agile enough to snare one in my hat while on the stream. I would guess that to anyone who doesn't fly fish this all sounds a bit crazy.

In retrospect I would have to agree with them, however by being able to identify and predict what flies are on the water we are more likely to be able to deceive the trout into eating our feathered offerings.

The collection of mayflies, that are littering my desk, include a large March Brown, a Gray Drake, *mirus* spinners, and what I believe to be a Pale Evening Dun and a Slate Winged Mahogany Dun. The big hatch on the Saco in June is the Gray Drake followed closely by the *mirus*. The *mirus* may be unique to the Saco and is not very well known by fly fishers from out of state. These two hatches are what Saco fly fishers live for.

The first Gray Drakes started showing around June 4<sup>th</sup> this year and will no doubt still be going strong when this article is printed. The Drakes are at their peak around the second week of the month, but will generally last until the first of July.

It is the big spinner falls that occurs during this hatch that is important to the angler, as well as the trout. For whatever reason the dun stage is not evident. The spinner falls come off, for the most part in the evening. However, should the fall not occur in the evening it will sometimes come off in the early morning.

Needless to say we spend a lot of time trying to figure this all out and be on the water when the blessed event happens. We have been attempting for over a week to catch one of these spinner falls since they first made their appearance. Sunday night was the first time that we were able to get a chance and, while maybe not the best hatch of the year, it was productive.

We were on the water shortly after 6:30 in the evening. It didn't take long before we were into some good fish. The first fish of the evening came to a number of different flies, none of which had anything to do with Gray Drake or spinner falls. It wasn't until dusk that the first Drakes made their appearance. As usual the males showed up first and then a few females. Just at dark they started to get into it hot and heavy. Soon after spent males and over depositing females began to litter the surface. For about twenty minutes trout were rising everywhere. Just as soon

as it got really dark it was allover. All in all a pretty good evening.

The real thrill ride of the evening was walking out. Per usual I had neglected to bring my head lamp. Despite a new moon it was darn dark. Fortunately Summer knows where to find the trail better than we do and with her help managed to get back to the parking lot.

Monday morning, back at the shop, our first customers of the day came in with tales of a huge spinner fall just at sunrise and not surprisingly tales of large trout. Like I said sometimes the best fishing can be early. As for me I am content to fish the gentlemanly way and fish the evening rise.

See you on the river.