

Valley Angler
The Angler and the Cell Phone
by Bill Thompson

The other evening I did something that I thought I would never do. I took a phone call while fishing. When it comes to technology I am always the last one to get the news. After every one of my friends received computers I finally got one and in all honesty I am still way behind the curve in learning how to use the thing. As for the cell phone I was pretty much convinced that it was a tool of the devil and I am still not totally convinced that it isn't.

For years I have been watching other drivers cut me off in traffic while talking on their phones. I still get a kick out of watching local real estate people driving to work in the morning. I always pass a couple of different ones every morning; you know who they are because they always have their company logos on their BMW's. Every morning these folks have their ears glued to a cell phone. Now these are all local folks and you know that their offices can't be more than a couple miles more down the road; what could be so important that they have to call the office so early.

Even worse is the number of truck drivers that have one hand on the phone and the other on the wheel. It would seem that the cell phone has replaced the CB mike.

Of course everyone has experienced the agony of the boar that answers his cell phone in a restaurant. This guy always has a bad connection and is forced to shout into the thing forcing everyone in the place to share his conversation. A conversation which generally is idiotic or designed to make him look important, which in any case is still idiotic.

My first encounter with a cell phone, while fly fishing, was one evening when a client, who had just caught a fish asked if he could take a photo of it. Not being in-tune with the real world I was taken back when he produced his cell phone and not a camera.

Not long after that another client, while still standing in the river, called his wife to tell her he had just caught his first trout on a fly rod.

Not that long ago I finally succumbed and at the insistence of my son got a cell phone. Of course I vowed to never take the darn thing fishing. Until last summer, when after walking a client down river for about two miles and then making him wade across the river he said to me, "You know I just had open heart surgery two weeks ago". After I nearly had a heart attack it occurred to me that it might not be all that bad an idea to carry the phone when guiding.

This week an old fly fishing friend told me probably the worse fishing/cell phone story I have heard to date. He was fishing a favorite spot on the Saco the other evening when another fisherman stepped out on a rock right in front of where he was casting. In order to establish his space my friend made a cast to the rock where he had been catching trout. The intruder didn't seem phased and made a cast up stream. As it turned out he was a pretty good angler and by fishing up stream he started to catch fish. By the way this is hard to do. Casting up stream presents a number of problems for the angler. To begin with its hard to get the fly to drift back to you in a natural manner and keep a tight line all at the same time. So this fellow was indeed a gifted fly fisher.

My friend went on to say that out of the clear blue the guy begin to talk. At first he thought that he was talking to him, but when he made an attempt to answer it was clear that he was not who he was talking to. After a few minutes of this another guy came along and took up a position slightly above the talker. This guy too was talking also to no one in particular. Shortly there after another guy takes up a position below the original guy, this fellow was also keeping up a conversation. It suddenly occurred to my friend that these guys were all talking on cell phones. Each of these guys were equipped with those new phones that tuck into your ear like a hearing aid.

After hearing this it is doubtful that little more proof is needed to prove that the apocalypse is close at hand.

If anyone needed proof that the fishing was hot on the Saco all they had to do is take a look at the parking lot at First Bridge early in the morning or in the evening. Hats off to our Fish & Game Department. They may have been a little slow this year, but they have more than made up for it now. Same holds true for the Ellis as it too is fishing very well as of late. Trouble is the fishing is so good on the Saco no one will go to the Ellis now.

I got a chance to fish an hour or two on the Androscoggin River late Monday afternoon. The fishing was very good below the Pontook Dam. Several of the

boards on the dam were damaged this past winter so there is a good flow coming over the top of the dam in several places. This has made it a little more difficult to wade in front of the dam and it is now hard for more than a couple of anglers to fish there. There were already two guys ahead of me when I got there, but even in fished over water I managed a couple of nice rainbows.

The only problem right now is that there are just too many good places to fish. It is not enough that the local streams are fishing so well the stripers are on too. "So many streams so little time".

See you on the river.