

Valley Angler

The Good, the Bad and Down Right Ugly

by Bill Thompson

This last week has been what I consider to be the first real hard core fishing week of the season. By the first week June all of the planets are in a line to make for the best fishing of the year. The rivers should by now be at reasonable levels and their temperatures should be right for both trout and the insects that they feed on. This is the time of year when the true angler leaves behind his family and all other worldly pursuits in order to fish. For me it started a week ago last Sunday with the first drift trip of the year on the Androscoggin. We had booked a trip, but had a last minute calculation. The boat was begging to get wet so it was decided that I would be the test dummy on the shake down cruise. Rick Gerber, the ships captain, had spent the winter applying new varnish and making a few improvements to the boat. The new back rests are a welcome addition to the almost perfect craft.

The morning was overcast and rain was promised for latter in the day. We cast off around 10:00 AM at Mollidgewock and took out at 8:30 that evening. We ran into the rain in the afternoon almost on schedule. After all that we only caught 4 fish, one of which was a bass. We stopped and talked to a few other anglers and they all had pretty much the same story; darn few fish. Needless to say we still had a great time even though about half way through the trip I came down with a cold.

On Wednesday I helped stock trout in the Saco. Our local T.U. chapter, Saco Valley Anglers, put in some awesome browns this year.

Thursday evening Janet and I took a shot at those big browns. Janet caught the first one, nothing new there, but I soon followed up with a slightly bigger one. We each took a couple more before we called it a night.

I returned to the Androscoggin on Friday for a day of wading. Fished from about 10 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon. Another slow day, only four fish, and only one was of decent size. Had to leave the river early as I was meeting our guests who were attending our weekend fly fishing school for dinner.

Spent Saturday morning teaching fly casting with our students on the Jackson Green. There were a sea of runners all around us, but we persevered. Saturday afternoon was spent fishing the Ellis. Not a single fish was caught. In all honesty I was not surprised. Since Memorial Day Weekend I have not heard of from anyone who has caught a trout in the Ellis River.

Saturday evening, after dinner, we fished the Saco with our students. We had a super night. Somehow we managed to miss the two thunder storms that rolled through the Valley. The first big Gray Drake spinner fall came off just about 8:00 o'clock. As many times as I have seen these spinner falls I still get a thrill out witnessing this awesome display of nature. Janet was in to a

fish right off and it proved to be the only one for the evening despite the hatch.

Location is everything in a spinner fall situation. These fish, which had just been released, were not all that tuned on to surface flies. The river splits at the bottom of the pool that we were fishing and an eddy is created to the left of the split. All of the dead and dying drakes were collecting in the eddy. As a result the one guy lucky enough to have plunked himself in that spot was catching fish on dries.

Sunday morning was spent on the Saco in another pool upstream from the pool we had fished the previous evening. Maybe we got too late of a start, but we only had one hook up for our effort.

I must admit my age is starting to tell. The spirit was willing, but my body was not and I did not fish Sunday evening. I probably should have as the Gray Drakes put on another great show. I received an e mail from a friend with pictures attached showing two beautiful trout that he had caught and released that evening.

On the whole the reports that I have been getting back from anglers this week are disappointing. I have talked to no one who has caught a trout in the Ellis this year in the fly fishing section. Very few fish have been caught above the covered bridge in Jackson. It appears that the photo that appeared in the Conway Daily Sun last Wednesday of the Saco being stocked and the accompanying copy gave an overly optimistic outlook. If it were not for the efforts of the Saco Valley Anglers this would have been a pretty poor weekend to have fished the Mount Washington Valley.

Early in the season Fish & Game did a great job of stocking our ponds, but this does not seem to be the same of our rivers. Considering the fact that conditions in the local rivers have been ideal I can't think of any reason why there are so few fish in the rivers. Well, there is the little matter of the financial woes of the Department. If the Department is attempting to drive home the point then consider it well taken.

It would seem that this Valley has suffered enough with the relentless construction and last spring's high water. I would bet that next week a lot of fishermen who might have come to our Valley for some trout fishing will head to the coast to go striper fishing.

See you on the river.