

# Valley Angler Saco Nights by Bill Thompson

For the past few days the “Valley” has been an angler's paradise. I have had the good fortune to have been on the Saco just about every evening either with clients or just fishing for fun. Every night has been different, but the results have been the same, good.

Early in the week the Gray Drake hatches began in earnest. These large mayflies provide some of the very best dry fly fishing available in our area. The event isn't so much a hatch, although most call it that, what really happens is the spinner fall. The male Drakes begin to appear about dusk and are soon joined by the females. What occurs next is a mayfly airborne orgy. As soon as the mating ritual is complete the males die and fall to the water soon to be joined by the female's right after they have completed laying their eggs. Needless to say the trout have a field day gorging themselves on spent mayflies.

The first night that I witnessed them I was positive that it was too cold for the cycle to come off and left the river early. Boy was I wrong. According to my friend Nate, as soon as I left the river the action started. I really didn't feel all that bad about having missed it, as I had previously caught several very nice fish on caddis patterns. Nate, however, had a great evening.

The next night I was on the river with a couple of clients. We arrived well before the Drakes showed and like the night before amused ourselves catching trout on Muddlers and Slump Busters. A couple also rose to a new caddis fly that shows great promise. The fly is called the Corn Fed Caddis and is tied with Cul de Canard, or loosely translated “Duck's Butt”. CDC feathers are found close to the ducks butt, where a gland is located that secretes a substance that helps float duck. Ducks spend a lot of time picking themselves and preening their feathers with this natural floatant. Needless to say those feathers float exceptionally well and make great flies. The discovery of these feathers, as fly tying material, is attributed to the French although CDC flies are very popular all over Europe as well as right here in the USA. What can you say about a country that likes Jerry Lewis and finds fly tying material from a duck's butt. The Corn Fed Caddis has an added bonus in that it has a white tuft of Z-Lon tied in on top that makes the fly highly visible in low light.

The following evening turned out to be a bust. An old friend came by to fish with me and unfortunately I picked the wrong pool and the wrong side of the river to boot. Saturday night is not the night to fish the Saco. I know I should be the last one to whine when the river is full of fishermen. Let's face I do spend a lot of time promoting it. We arrived early enough to secure a good position, however it wasn't too long before a number of other anglers arrived and entered the pool right beside us. The spinner fall came off later than expected and I had to leave before the good fishing started. As I was walking out Nate had found the sweet spot on the opposite side of the river and had begun to catch trout one right after the other. My friend John and I were forced to head home with the smell of skunk on us.

Monday night turned out to be the best. To begin with I had the good fortune to guide two old friends who had purchased the trip at a charity event last year. It had taken a while but we had finally found the right time to get together. The evening started slow with very little action. It wasn't until just around

eight that the first Gray Drakes began to show. A few minutes later and the game was on. The sky was filled with romantic mayflies. The trout, who up until now had been silent, began to rise in earnest. It didn't take long before one of the guys had a trout on. Turns out he had the hot hand that night. Somehow it always seems to work out that way; one guy in the party will always out fish everyone else. The other fellow did finally hook up and caught several before the night was through. Once both of my sports had fish I went up stream a little ways and made a few casts of my own. I don't often do this when guiding and in fact make a rule not to. However, this evening was a little different and seeing as how they were friends I didn't think they would mind as they both continued to hook and land fish without my expert guidance.

On my first cast I missed one. On the second cast I had him, a nice fat brook trout. And so it went, all of us shouting and yelling out when we hooked another fish until the spinner fall came to an end and the river went silent. It was over, the fat mayfly had sung the last aria and it was time to call it a night. We reeled in and headed back to the parking lot. Back at the parking lot we took off our waders in the dark, said our good byes and headed our separate ways. The end of another perfect evening on the Saco in June.

Good friends and trout fishing just seem to go hand and hand.

Good spinner falls should continue for another couple of weeks. Last year we continued to experience them right into July. However, there is a limited window of opportunity and time is wasting.

See you on the river.