

Valley Angler Fall Is In The Air by Bill Thompson

It is starting to feel a lot like fall which translates into time “to go fishing again”. Actually the fishing this past August hasn't been all that bad. This year August has been by far the best fishing month we have had all year. June and July were almost a total “washout” and the pun is intentional. In general the month of August is just about always the worst of the summer months to wet a line. Blame it on climate change, global warming or Aquarius being in the house of a rising moon the last two years have had some unusual weather patterns. Two straight years of abnormal amounts of rainfall in June and July have resulted in turning August into the better fishing month of the season.

At the moment water temperatures on the Saco are running in the mid fifties and the flow has finally subsided to one comfortable enough to wade in without being washed down river into Maine. There is more good news: there are plenty of fish to catch as well.

Now that the Saco has returned to its usual gin clear complexion it is once again easy to locate fish. Needless to say the fish also have the same advantage as they can see you just as well. This time of year most rising fish are taking midges. Fishing midges is a lot of fun, but it can be frustrating. Saco trout are among the smartest fish in New Hampshire. By this time of year they have seen a lot of flies pass over their heads and coupled with that gin clear water they have the advantage. The least bit of drag and they are “out of there”. Long, fine and supple leaders are essential to catching these fish. I am not sure that the pattern is all that important other than being the right size, although I am sure there are those that would argue the point. My feeling is that the presentation is the all important factor in fooling these guys.

Oddly enough in a complete reversal of what I have just said these same fish can be a sucker for a large grasshopper pattern. Even on a bright day a large hopper cast hard to the bank can bring a slashing strike. Which brings up another point. Now that school is back session and most of the boat traffic has been eliminated from the river it is now possible for a fisherman to have a good day of fishing without fear of being run over.

The Ellis River is currently fishing just about as well as I have ever seen it. For weeks people have been in the shop bragging about the fish that they have just caught in the Ellis. Some of these fellows have even had photographic evidence to back up their claims. This past week I managed to find the time to fish the Ellis to see for myself. And they were right.

The other evening I spent a couple of hours on the river with Nate. To say that we had a spectacular evening is putting mildly. When I got to the river Nate was had already arrived and was somewhere down stream out of sight. I rigged up and waded in. I dubbed around a bit trying a couple of different flies without much success. I finally spotted a few actively rising trout and began to cast in their direction. Within a few moments I had caught a couple of nice brook trout. The evening was off to a good start.

Shortly after I had caught the trout Nate appeared over my shoulder. He said that he had also managed a couple of trout just around the bend. He soon took up a position up river from me and began

to cast. With in only a few minutes Nate was into his first fish. A nice rainbow came to his net and I waded over to take a quick snap shot before Nate released him back into the water. I had just got back into my spot when Nate had a second trout. This time I let Nate release him without the photo op. Dang, if Nate didn't hook another one a moment latter. This time it was a big brook trout, large enough that I was obliged to wade back up and get a couple of pictures.

Sometimes location is everything and Nate had the right place at the right time not to mention the right fly. Nate politely offered to switch places with me but I could reach some of the same water without moving and I had spotted a couple of more rising fish. I did inquire as to what fly he was using and as luck would have it I had one in my box. It didn't take long before I was into a nice rainbow of my own. I missed a couple more and decided to call it a night. The sun was beginning to disappear below the purple hills and a chill was settling in. The time was right and I left the pool to Nate. I haven't seen him since that evening, but I am sure that he stayed for quite a while after I left and I have no doubt that he caught several more good fish before he called it quits.

See you on the river.