

A St. Mary's Adventure

One early morning in July many years ago I headed for the Wire Pool just below Silver's Pool on Nova Scotia's St. Mary's River. It was to be a bright, sunny day and the water had cleared following a big rain 2 days earlier. My spirits were as high and mighty as the St. Mary's was that day, and my optimism turned out to be well-founded.

Despite expecting a take on each and every cast, it didn't happen, even though I had the odd rise to my wet fly as I moved down the west side of the pool. As fishless anglers always do, I found an excuse. "The salmon are moving up in this high water", I reasoned, knowing that moving fish may rise once to a fly before continuing upstream.

Eventually I reached the deep hole at the end of the Wire Pool. Just below is a slick run that leads to the Meadow Pool. I always fished the Meadow Pool from the east side, a large island's gravel shore, although it was mostly fished by others from the west side.

I continued my journey to the Meadow Pool's island by crossing the slick run at its widest and shallowest point. The maximum depth was a bit less than 3 ft. but around the middle of the pool I stepped into a depression of 1 ft. or so in the gravel that surprised me. It was an empty lamprey eel redd where a single grilse was resting and my intrusion caused him to jump out of the water a few feet from me. Knowing I had chased him out of his hole I continued across to the island and fished the Meadow Pool without success.

Once I recall fishing alone from that island when anglers on the other side got my attention by yelling and pointing downstream. The largest bear I've ever seen was slowly crossing over to my side near the downstream end of the island, maybe 200 yards from me. Having caught and kept a grilse earlier, I worried that the fish scent might attract the big bruin, but it disappeared behind the island's high grass not to be seen again. What a thrill!

It was now late morning, getting warm and I was getting hungry, so I headed back upstream for brunch. I wondered whether the grilse had reclaimed his resting spot, and so I waded across the slick well below the redd. I then walked along the shore to a point just above the hole and started fishing. Upon reaching the spot I was rewarded by a solid take and a long downstream run with a jump at the end that threw the hook.

Then I knew the answer. The grilse had settled back into his spot, and he had furthermore calmed down enough to take my fly after being so rudely disturbed.

I smiled as I thought of the incident over brunch and into my afternoon nap. It was a fishless but glorious morning on the St. Mary's, where adventure generally awaits the

angler looking for one.

A perfect fly for that bright and sunny morning would be the Silver DownEaster, as tied by Sheet Harbour's Chris Williams.



Silver DownEaster

Hook: #12 – 2 Bartleet Supreme salmon hook
Thread: Black
Tag: Oval silver tinsel
Tail: Golden pheasant crest
Butt: Black ostrich herl
Rib: Oval silver tinsel
Body: Flat silver tinsel
Throat: Orange hen hackle
Wing: Black squirrel or black bear
Head: Black, finished with clear head cement