

Low Water Vacation

Before retirement Molly and I greatly enjoyed our vacations. A couple of weeks away from the grind were truly invigorating. Our fly rods felt like natural extensions of our right arms after a few days on Nova Scotia's wonderful St. Mary's River.

We'd be hoping for a good rain just before or during vacation time to create ideal conditions for a fresh run of Atlantic salmon and great fishing. Two inches of rain, about 50 cm, will raise the river's water level by about a meter, setting us up for a week or so of heavenly adventure that we'd dreamed about though the long winter.

I'm recalling one vacation in particular when the weatherman failed us. He delivered only hot beach weather type days, not good at all for vacationing at a camp on a salmon pool far up in the St. Mary's watershed's woodland. It brought no new fish, only swarms of biting deer flies that invaded our hair. Even the bright yellow chanterelle mushrooms we liked didn't pop up through the dry moss, preferring to wait for rain.

Our only relief from the oppressive heat was at night, when temperatures often dropped to mid-teens. I'd rise at the crack of dawn and check the outside temperature. If it hadn't dropped substantially I'd go back to bed. No point in bothering the salmon if the water was too warm. But if the night temperature cooled the river water, some early fishing before breakfast usually proved interesting.

It happened that there was a small school of grilse, maybe six in number, that had settled into the holding pool in front of the camp a couple of weeks earlier, just before the water level dropped off. They were to provide my sport during that two-week vacation.

Molly preferred sleeping in much later than I, getting up for a trip to Port Hilford beach by late morning. I'd accompany her, still thinking of my fishing early in the day.

I knew that I'd ruin the limited fishing opportunity that I had if I hooked and played out those few fish that might take a fly. I broke the bend off the fly hooks so that I could fish without hurting those grilse. My rationale was that we could play the same game another day.

The strategy worked very well. There was one playful grilse with an identifying mark on his back that would day after day rise repeatedly to my fly in all sorts of ways, even upside down. I never struck the fly so as not to turn him off. Every fishable day for two weeks we played our game, like a boy and his dog playing in the yard.

It was a very different fishing vacation, but one I'll always remember. I'd made a new friend on the St. Mary's River!

Mark Tobin of Meiklefield, Pictou County, NS has been totally blind for some 30 years now, but he is still an avid fly fisher and exceptional fly tyer. Here's one of his remarkable trout flies that he kindly gave me, the Golden Stonefly. Actually, we exchanged flies, the beginning of another great friendship!

- Bill Carpan, Stillwater NS



Golden Stonefly

Hook:	#4 streamer hook
Thread:	White
Tail:	Two yellow goose biots, divided & few strands of yellow Krystal Flash
Body:	Rear half: silver Diamond Braid with woven mono over, forming a flattened & tapered body
Legs:	Two yellow goose biots, divided
Body:	Front half: pearl metallic or Mylar chenille
Hackle:	Yellow cock hackle tied back collar-style
Wing case:	Two turkey tail sections
Feelers:	Two yellow paint brush bristles, divided Mark advises tying in the feelers in as 1 st step in tying the fly.
Eyes:	Clear beads joined by mono melted on each end
Head:	White thread finished with clear head cement

