

# LIVE WATER P R O P E R T I E S



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## MOUNTAIN WEST HATCH REPORT

### Understanding Stream Flows: Where to Visit, What to Fish!



Planning a trip to the West can be a daunting task especially when you are an angler trying to wade through the many options available in the region. As locals in the Rocky Mountain West for many years, avid fly fishermen, drift boat owners and Brokers for Live Water Properties, we make a living selling trout streams. The knowledge of these regional fisheries and successful days on the water is important to our livelihood and mental well being.

Knowing the hatches and having the right bugs in your box is a large part of the equation, however discerning when to fish each river can be the tricky part. For most anglers in the region, a daily check of the stream flow charts is as religious as morning coffee, especially during the spring and early summer months. The [United States Geological Survey \(USGS\)](#) provides efficient and accurate gauging stations on most of the major rivers and tributaries. For more on when to visit and where to fish, check out our [blog here...](#)

## **MONTANA**

### **Yellowstone Springs Ranch - Emigrant**

The Yellowstone River is currently running nearly 3,000 CFS near Emigrant, which normally would be around 5,500 for mid-July. Fishing for cutthroats with dries, upstream from the ranch has been good, and we are seeing a nice mix of rainbow, cutthroat and brown trout on the property. Afternoon rains have been muddying the river for a few hours to a few days, and days with good clarity have seen excellent trout fishing. Caddis and mayfly hatches are occurring daily, and fish are getting into regular feeding patterns targeting these bugs. Streamers and big stonefly nymphs are always effective on the Yellowstone, particularly when used as a point fly with a small bead head dropper. In late July and all of August, fish are receptive to ant, beetle and hopper surface presentations, as well as attractor dries like royal wulffs or trudes. Don't forget about the ranch's private ponds; mornings and evenings have been great times to catch big stillwater trout.

### **Rockin' DK Ranch - Victor**

The Bitterroot has been fishing well in the morning and early afternoon. Try a chubby chernobyl or ant and be ready to switch to your favorite PMD when you see trout on the surface. Search with a hopper/dropper rig and don't be afraid to fish the deeper holes with a bead head indicator rig.

### **Smokin' Rock Ranch - Swan Lake**

Light snowpack has the Swan River very wadeable and fishable this summer. Floating the ranch and anchoring to hit the major holes has been a fun and effective angling strategy. Brown, tan and green caddis, blue-winged olive and PMD mayflies, and small golden stoneflies are staple food items for the rainbow and westslope cutthroat population. Terrestrials, like ants and beetles, are a major food source for the trout beginning in late July, and the fish are always interested in a variety of attractor dry fly patterns.

### **Madison Spring Creek Ranch - Three Forks**

Water levels in Hebgen and Ennis Lakes have helped provide an excellent early summer on the Lower Madison. Consistent caddis and PMD hatches throughout recent weeks have meant great dry fly activity, particularly in the mornings and evenings. An atypical amount of big fish (20" +) have been landed thus far on the Lower Madison this year, particularly by fishermen dead-drifting crayfish and small streamer patterns through parts of the river's deeper buckets and runs. The section of the river flowing through Madison Spring Creek Ranch continues to fish well. Its braided nature makes it increasingly accessible to wade fishermen as flows decrease. If the hot weather continues, this will cause the Lower Madison fishery to slow down, but river fishing should still be good in the cool mornings. Darlington Spring Creek also had a great spring and early summer fishing season with similar patterns bringing fish to hand. Small streamers can be effective for producing big fish on Darlington, and as the summer wears on, hopper fishing along the grassy banks of the creek should become increasingly productive. As a spring creek, the restored section of Rey Creek traversing Madison Spring Creek Ranch is resistant to the temperature fluctuations seen in Darlington and the main river. Healthy hatches of PMDs, caddis and midges continue. Crippled mayfly patterns and small emergers

have been effective. As terrestrial fishing begins, small beetle and ant patterns on light tippet should bring fish to the surface, but you'll need long casts and sneaky approaches. *[Check out the video!](#)*

## **East Gallatin River Retreat - Bozeman**

The East has been fishing well with morning and late evening being the prime time on the water. Clouds of caddis are hatching every night, and the fish are targeting these bugs enthusiastically. A variety of small bead head nymphs like hare's ear, pheasant tail, copper John's and prince, are extremely effective in the deeper pools and undercut bank runs. Fish are also chasing small streamers and rubber leg stonefly patterns later in the evening, with wooly buggers, leech patterns and yuk bugs in olive, brown and black being great choices. A streamer pattern on the point with a small rubber leg nymph as a dropper has been a deadly combo when stripped through deeper water. Tricos will be hatching come August, and the fish will be looking for these.

## **Shields River Valley Ranch - Livingston**

Due to light snowpack and early warm temperatures, runoff in the Shields River was over in late June this year. Fishing has been consistently good, although with stable warm days in July and August, peak feeding periods are generally early morning and evening, and fish are holding in the deepest pools and cool riffles. Current hatches include caddis, mayfly and small stonefly, and fish are eating both nymph and adult imitations. Small bead heads, attractor dries and terrestrial patterns are the rule during most of the day. Toward evening, imitative dry fly patterns that match the specific adult caddis or mayfly hatch are the ticket. With overcast conditions, streamers and bigger nymphs have been effective for larger brown and cutthroat trout - wooly buggers, any type of sculpin pattern, and rubber-legged girdle bugs are great choices. *[Check out the video!](#)*

## **Historic Black Bluffs on the Yellowstone River - Park City**

The flows are running a bit above normal for the date, but clarity is improving. In the main channel, it's best to work a nymph rig that gets down into the current and depth. Try big ugly, rubber leg stonefly nymphs, bitch creek, girdle bug, San Juan worms and buggers on the edges. If there is a window of a foot or so of visibility on the edges, try tossing streamers off the bank.

## **Antelope Creek Ranch - Big Timber**

The Yellowstone River is currently running just under 4,000 CFS near Livingston, which is below normal. Some afternoon rains have been muddying the river for a few hours to a few days. Days with good clarity have seen some great trout fishing. Caddis and mayfly hatches are occurring daily, and fish are getting into regular feeding patterns targeting these bugs. Streamers and big stonefly nymphs are always effective on the Yellowstone, particularly when used as a point fly with a small bead head dropper. In late July and all of August, fish are receptive to ant, beetle and hopper surface presentations, as well as attractor dries like royal wulffs or trudes. The kamloop rainbows in the two ponds on the ranch eagerly hit a variety of stillwater flies including scud imitations, leeches, and both damsel and calibaetis patterns.

## **South Fork Madison Ranch - West Yellowstone**

Fishing has been great on the South Fork of the Madison and on the property's lake. On the river expect to see PMDs in the morning and evening caddis with possible grey or green drakes during the day. Ants and hoppers are still several weeks away but should be great in late July and August. The higher elevation of this ranch should have it fishing well all summer even if other Montana rivers suffer due to higher water temperatures. The property's lake has been fishing great for trophy trout: look for calibaetis hatches or try a dry damsel. If the trout are not looking up, tie on a leach, small bugger, bead hare's ear or damsel nymph.

## **Lost Creek Ranch - Deer Lodge**

It may not be the best-known spring creek in Montana, but don't let that fool you: Lost Creek is for real. A standard spring creek fly selection will work well, and we have had great success with hoppers with bead heads. If you are looking for a larger fish show them a bugger. So far flows are strong in Lost Creek, and we anticipate this to last all summer.

## **Spring Creeks on the Madison - Three Forks**

This ranch could be the best and most diverse fishing property of its size in the West, and it has been fishing great all spring and early summer. That should continue for the rest of the season. The Lower Madison on the property may still offer some early morning angling opportunities but the water temp has risen to the point where mid-day fishing is not a good option. Darlington Ditch (Spring Creek) has been great with PMDs, caddis, and terrestrials for dries, with tricos still a few weeks away. Small beads, scuds and buggers have been effective when fish are not eating dries. We have seen several browns well over 20 inches come to the net this summer. Rey Spring Creek has been good; small dries and ants are generally the order of the day, dropping a small bead behind a small hopper works well too. The pond has been good in the morning and evening with the trout going deep during mid-day. Schedule a tour this summer and bring your fly rod.

## **Clark Fork Meadow Ranch - Deer Lodge**

The Upper Clark Fork has been low this summer, well below normal. Early morning fishing can still be good with a dry golden stone or caddis, and deeper holes should produce some nice trout with a bugger or bead head and indicator rig.

## **Duck Creek Cabin at Yellowstone Park - West Yellowstone**

Duck Creek on the property and in Yellowstone Park is fishing well and should be great all summer. Like most park small meadow fisheries, try dry flies first. PMDs or drakes can be hatching almost anytime, and if you don't see surface activity try an attractor, hopper or ant. Don't hesitate to drop a small bead head below a hopper. Duck Creek Lake is fishing well; try a Parachute Adams or other mayfly imitation, nymph, or streamer fish with a pheasant tail, leech or damsel nymph.

## **Stillwater River Ranch - Nye**

Flows are ticking downward making the wade fishing conditions ideal on the ranch and throughout the river. A big dry fly and small bead head dropper rig is always a safe bet. If fish aren't taking a big foam pattern, start



sizing down. However, as the fish start looking up more and more for hoppers, these big foam patterns will start producing more consistently. If things are quiet on the surface, a safe bet would be a shallow nymph rig with a standard set-up...larger stone fly nymph with a small bead head tied off the back. Fish are starting to examine hoppers too, so don't hesitate to experiment with different patterns. Good early morning and late afternoon hatches of PMDs and caddis have been producing fish as well.



## WYOMING

### Cody Creek Ranch - Jackson Hole

Cody Creek Ranch's spring creek has been fishing well especially since the enhancement project finished up in spring of 2015. Wild cutthroat trout are rising to PMD imitations and hoppers this time of year, and there are plentiful scuds and other aquatic insects in the pond system. A cinnamon ant or black beetle will always fool the pickiest of trout in this system!

### Circle Lazy H Ranch on Fall Creek - Jackson Hole

Fishing on the ranch has been fantastic lately. Plenty of PMDs around and the hopper fishing on the south fork of Fall Creek is action packed. There are damsel flies being taken on the pond and plenty of eager fish in the creeks. *Check out the video!*

### Double Eagle Ranch - Star Valley

The flows on the Salt are hovering around the 500 cfs mark, and the water clarity has been good for the past 3 weeks. This has opened up more wade fishing opportunities, but makes for longer days in the boat. Fish have been keyed in on the PMDs and caddis however, on the cloudy days a streamer stripped slowly through the deeper holes could produce a larger brown. Focus your attention on the spring creeks as they enter the Salt as the cooler water tends to be a gathering spot for good numbers of fish. Terrestrial season is fast approaching! *Check out the video!*

### Mickelson Ranch - Big Piney

The Green River and the New Fork River are destination fisheries for many anglers, which are located in proximity to the Mickelson Ranch. The flows near Warren Bridge on the Green have been hovering around

700 cfs, and the recent cooler weather has kept the fish active giving them a break from the heat. PMDs and caddis are the predominant hatches currently, however we are heading into the terrestrial season where large foam patterns placed in the right spot can solicit an exciting brown trout strike. On cloudy cooler days, don't hesitate to hit the undercut banks with a large streamer pattern. *Check out the video!*

## **Warm River Ranch - Dubois**

The Wind River is starting to heat up. With over a mile of river, the Warm River Ranch controls some of the best fishing in the Dubois area. Morning and afternoon caddis hatches are providing excellent dry fly action with fish continuing to smack the streamers during the day. A day's fishing normally leads the "Wind Slam" of cutthroat, rainbow, brook and brown trout. Fishing should continue to improve throughout the summer with the big browns moving in for the fall spawn.

## **Dogwood Valley Ranch - Pinedale**

Dogwood Valley Ranch has produced excellent fishing so far this summer. Grey drakes are the hot bug for the end of June and early July, and now nice hatches of PMDs are a daily occurrence. We are throwing lots of stones and attractors as well, as the biggest browns are aggressively looking to take larger offerings! As we move into late summer and fall, we expect terrestrials to play a larger role with ants and beetles taking the more selective trout. *Check out the video!*

## **Riffles 'n Rises Ranch - Star Valley**

Fishing on the Riffles 'n Rises Ranch has been excellent. Expect to see golden stones on the Salt River for the next few weeks, followed by PMDs and terrestrials. The PMD hatch in the spring creeks is turning on mid-morning, and fish are also keying in on smaller terrestrials like ants and beetles. The damselfly fishing in the spring pond should start to produce larger fish in the near future.

## **Three Ball Ranch - Boulder**

The fishing on the East Fork at the Three Ball Ranch was outstanding last week with a few drakes in the morning and steady streamer fishing throughout the day. Almost a true brown trout fishery, we are seeing a daily increase in fish as they migrate up from the New Fork River, which should continue until after the spawn. With 4 miles of the East Fork, the Three Ball offers some of the best private fishing in the West.

## **Lazy Bar F Ranch - Cody**

The South Fork of the Shoshone is on fire. After a heavy snowpack and late runoff, the fish are hungry. After fishing Lazy Bar F last week, the most challenging aspect was trying to find something that the fish wouldn't eat. With the river still running high, we focused on the side channels and smaller pools pulling the "South Fork slam", rainbow, brown, cutthroat and brook trout out of every spot. With the high water, the South Fork should fish well throughout September and provide some of the best and most scenic wade fishing Wyoming has to offer. *Check out the video!*

## Kalavala Ranch on the Salt River - Star Valley

The flows on the Salt remain steady around 600 cfs near Star Valley. Expect to find fish eating caddis, PMDs and the occasional small stones. As we transition into the second half of the summer, terrestrial fishing on the surface and tight to the shaded banks will begin to attract more fish. Streamers on cloudy days slow-stripped through the deeper pools can be productive. If floating the river, focus your attention on the confluence of spring creeks as they enter the river system.

## Stone Creek Ranch on the Salt - Star Valley

The flows are healthy, the water is cold, and the fish are on the bite! Dry fly fishing is at its peak right now with eager cutthroat hammering large hopper and terrestrial patterns. Pulling streamers through deeper holes may get the bigger fish to bite, but there is no shortage of action on the Salt River these days.



## COLORADO

### Hidden Lake Ranch - Pagosa Springs

Hopper season is in full swing! Big fish taking big bugs is what we're seeing on Weminuche Creek. Drop a small bead head off one of your chubby chernobyls or favorite hopper pattern to increase your chances during the mid-day sun. The lakes are fishing very well with attractors on the surface and small leeches and other streamer patterns. Look for rising fishing during the early morning and evening PMD and caddis hatches. *Check out the video!*

### North Fork Ranch - Bailey

The North Platte River has stabilized to an ideal summer flow following a large runoff this year. Afternoon sprinkles and cloud cover can trigger epic red quill hatches that we have not seen since last year. With the first successful dry fly day of the season down, we are looking forward to the drake hatch soon! *Check out the video!*

### Elk Creek Ranch - Meeker

Broker **Brian Hartley** experienced the prolific hatches and eager fish last week. In the evenings, the caddis hatch was a spectacle to behold - every streamside willow was seemingly alive with caddis flies, and the trout were taking every opportunity to gorge themselves on the clumsy flies as they briefly touched down on the water. The YZ Ranch portion of the Elk Creek Ranch is enjoying a myriad of surface mayfly activity with basic adams-style patterns proving very effective to bring large sipping rainbows to the net. Cicadas and hoppers are out in big numbers, and the terrestrial fishing is on the verge of turning on in a big way. *Check out the video!*

## **Wheatley Homestead on the Roaring Fork - Aspen**

Courtesy of our friends at the **Taylor Creek Fly Shop**: It's getting better each and every day along the upper river with hatches resuming as the water levels continue to drop. Caddis are the main hatch (for now), with lighter numbers of PMDs and a few stoneflies. By the end of the month we will see Green Drakes come to fruition along with heavier numbers of PMDS as the BWOs (blue-winged olives) begin to fade away. Dry fly junkies are doing well fishing dry/dropper goodies midday, with the heaviest hatches (caddis) occurring during the last hour of light. Don't forget to skate, skitter and bump around your caddis dries for the best success.

Nymphing has been producing the most fish out there on a day to day basis. The number one rule up here right now is to focus on fishing the soft pockets of water AND to cover water. One of the benefits of fishing during the backend of runoff and in higher water flows is that you can eliminate 99% of the water/river. That remaining 1% of river is just loaded and stacked with fishing making "reading the water" very easy. Remember, when you catch one fish - there's probably another 12 in that same pool. Stoneflies and drake nymphs are fishing well, as lead/point flies with smaller PMD and BWO patterns as dropper trailing flies.

## **Crystal Creek on the Taylor River - Crested Butte**

An exceptional tailwater fishery, the Taylor River trout always tend to react well to a well-placed mysis shrimp or generally buggy bead head nymph. The celebrated green drake hatch appears to be just around the corner at which time the already fantastic dry fly fishing will really get the water boiling with rising fish.

## **Sleeping Dog Ranch - Gunnison, Colorado**

Courtesy of our friends at **Crested Butte Angler**: The fishing at Sleeping Dog Ranch has been absolutely phenomenal. Hoppers are the name of the game in the morning as thousands are swarming around the meadow. No dropper is necessary - the fish are looking up all day long. Mid-day brown drakes, yellow sallies and caddis begin hatching, and the fish will key in on those. If the hopper bite begins to slow, throw on a larger mayfly pattern such as a parachute adams or a royal wulff and get ready, these wild brown trout are voracious. You can't ask for more than big fish eating dry flies on small water, and that's exactly what Sleeping Dog Ranch has to offer. Have fun!

## **Walden Hollow on the Colorado River - Granby**

Walden Hollow on the Colorado River is really coming into its own. With significant rains in recent months the flows were increased from the dam in order to make room for water coming into Lake Granby. As the



flows settle to more representative levels the fishing will continue to improve and hopper-dropper season should prove to be very productive.



## IDAHO

### Teton River Confluence Ranch - Teton Valley

Bitch Creek, Badger Creek and the Teton River are all fishing well with attractor patterns. Larger foam flies are still producing fish, but the cutthroat seem more willing to eat smaller hoppers and mayfly patterns during the heat of the day. A recent fishing trip on Bitch Creek yielded several larger fish on streamer patterns during low light, overcast conditions.

### Swan Valley Overlook - Swan Valley

The salmonfly hatch has come and gone, however large foam patterns on the slower inside edges and tight to the bank should still solicit a reaction from larger trout. Try dropping a smaller size 16-18 flashback pheasant tail behind the large foam to double the odds as most fish in the river system are keying in on the PMD hatches, which happen between noon and 5 P.M. The riffle fishing has been on fire with long hatch cycles and eager fish looking up for the better part of the afternoon. Small pink PMDs and the Quigly's cripple are sure bets. Learning the feeding patterns on this river is important. Knowing the difference between a fish taking an adult fly or an emerging fly can make all the difference! *Check out the video!*

### Duck Creek Preserve at Henry's Lake - Island Park

The healthy flows and cool water on Duck Creek are ideal for the dog days of summer on Henry's Lake. With the hotter summer temps on the lake, these trout start moving up into the cooler water tributaries. Duck Creek is a prime example. Fishing a hopper dropper pattern will produce good numbers and the early morning and evening PMD and caddis hatches are a great time to find rising fish.

### Teton Whitetail Meadows - Teton Valley

Teton Whitetail Meadows is in prime fishing shape. A 3-weight with a small box of mayfly and hopper patterns is all that is needed. Schroeder's parachute hopper, royal wulff and a Parachute Adams were the flies of choice this past week on our scouting trip. The brook trout are eager and willing to eat almost anything

drifted (or skated) overhead, and the water is gin-clear so sight fishing for these brook and cutthroat trout is a lot of fun.



## WASHINGTON

### Yakima Canyon Ranch - Ellensburg

Welcome to hopper season on the Yakima River! Fishing has been great lately. Temps on the river are staying in the mid-60s and most success is coming in the mornings with patterns like the Stalcup's hopper. If temps get up much higher, most anglers will go to Hoot Owl hours (mornings only). *Check out the video!*



## OREGON

### Luelling River Retreat - Madras, OR

The salmonfly and golden stone hatches are over and so are the throngs of fly fishermen plying the waters of the Lower Deschutes. This is great news for avid fly fishermen, as this time of year has the best hatches on the river. Huge caddis hatches come off throughout the dog days of summer. Fly fishermen focus on the back eddies in the evening, where reddsides throw caution to the wind and rise with reckless abandon. It is not unusual to have double digit hook-ups in the few hours of waning sunlight. Besides caddis, expect PMDs, Pale Evening Duns, green drakes and crane flies. In the heat of the day, nymphs can be deadly, but in the mornings and evenings, throw CDC and X-caddis dries. If the hatch is large and the fish are taking emergers, switch to sparkle pupae or soft hackle patterns in size 12-14. Other flies that work are yellow sallies, PMD comparaduns and sparkle duns. For mid-day nymphing, stick with the old standards like pheasant tails, hare's ears and attractor patterns. If all else fails, tie on a big streamer and strip it through deep pools. The

large reddsides will strike with fury.

The steelhead and salmon have started entering the Lower Deschutes and fish are being landed on the swing below Maupin. It won't be long before steelhead and salmon are right in front of Luelling River Retreat. This fishing will carry us into late fall and winter. Classic patterns such as the freight train, Mack's canyon, green butt skunk, and purple perils are all great wet flies to swing up a Deschutes steelhead this time of year. *Check out the video!*

## Hill Ranch - Long Creek, OR

Smallmouth bass are feeding readily to almost anything that hits the water at this time. Success for the smaller fish come on the surface using popper patterns like Sneaky Petes. If you find structure and depth, tie on some size 10-12 black, maroon or green leech patterns and hold on. The larger smallies will hit these flies hard.

## Oakview Ranch - Scio, OR

Crabtree Creek is running low and clear right now. There are plenty of cutthroat hanging out in the riffles along the ranch property. You will need light tippet, small caddis and mayfly patterns, or streamers under logs. Hatches in the evening can be impressive. If wanting larger fish to chase, both the North Fork and South Fork Santiam Rivers are just 15 minutes from the property. The summer run of steelhead is just winding down, and the fall chinook run will be turning on in September. *Check out the video!*



## UTAH

### Freestone River Ranch - Park City

The spring creek fishing on the Freestone River Ranch has been phenomenal! Big fish taking big dry flies. There is good action on smaller dries, as well, including PMDs, yellow sallies and caddis. Look for fish feeding in the spring creek's oxbow ponds during the morning and evening hatches. Flows on the Upper Provo are at their lower summer levels and fish are most active during the cooler morning and evening temps. Pulling a big streamer through the deeper holes on the river and spring creek can produce some large browns or bows. *Check out the video!*





## CALIFORNIA

### Indian Creek Lodge - Douglas City

Trinity River flows have reduced to 450 cfs allowing for great access all over. This is the time to start targeting the spring-run Chinook, averaging 10-20 pounds. Swing through the deeper pools and riffles to tie into these brutes. Although the primary steelhead season on the Trinity is September through March, fish are in the system nearly year-round and as summer progresses there is an increasing likelihood of coming across early summer-run steelhead. For a shot at big browns, try swing leeches and other streamers. Nearby Lewiston Lake is also fishing well with calibaetis starting around 9 A.M., and there is potential for carpenter ants and other terrestrials as the day continues.



## NEW MEXICO

### Cañones Creek Ranch on the Chama River - Chama

The Chama River has benefited from periodic afternoon thunderstorms and rain showers this past month. This precipitation keeps the flows from getting too low and maintains cool water. Fishing has been great using hopper patterns and various chernobyl patterns. Dropping a small to medium sized bead head off the back of one of these will increase your chances during the mid-day sun and heat. The deeper pools are still producing large browns eager to smack a streamer if it comes too close. The stocked ponds are always fishing well by slow-stripping a nymph, small streamer or throwing a small Parachute Adams or hopper pattern along the grassy banks.



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