

RADICAL REELS ON TOUR

HIGH FLY SUMMITS

2005/2006 World Tour

# BANFF MOUNTAIN

FILM FESTIVAL MAGAZINE

10<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Banff Mountain  
Photo Competition

Crack-  
Climbing  
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A Mountain Culture  
Program of:



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Salmonfly in the Black Canyon of Colorado's Gunnison River

## THE HATCH

What happens when fly fishers and hatching insects converge

BY BILL CORBETT

IMAGINE AN INSECT four centimetres (1.5 in.) long, with six gangly legs and a generous wingspan, creeping around your neck. Now imagine hundreds of such flies—milling overhead, crawling up your sleeves and pant legs, and even flying into your open mouth.

Sound like a Hitchcock movie? If you're a rabid fly fisher, such a writhing bug-fest is actually nirvana. And if it's the famed salmonfly hatch on western Colorado's Gunnison River, you'd happily scramble down some 700 metres (2300 ft.) of treacherous trail to a canyon floor to cast a dry fly to the ravenous 50-centimetre (20 in.) rainbow and brown trout feasting on these insects.

*The Hatch* is a 17-minute film by Ben Knight and local fishing guide Travis Rummel about the confluence of three things: a prolific hatch of river insects; the large trout that gorge

on them in this short stretch of clear-flowing river; and the passionate guides and clients who pay homage to this annual event.

During a three-week period in June, the large salmonflies, or stoneflies, that have been living along the river bottom emerge to hatch, breed, flutter through the air, and land on the water. Not surprisingly, the trout, which derive some three-quarters of their year's protein from this short-lived hatch, go into a feeding frenzy.

"Every time you're making a cast during the stonefly hatch, you have the possibility of catching the biggest fish you've ever seen," says one fanatic. The steep trek down to the river's edge, adds another, "is not something you want to do. It's something you *have* to do—if you're serious about fishing."

*The Hatch*, shot on a \$1000 (US)

budget, is about more than just fly-fishing enthusiasts and entomology. It's also about a river that, where it flows through Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, has one of the steepest descents (18 metres per kilometre, or 96 feet per mile) of any river in North America. With nearby farming and rapid development demanding ever more water, the film is an eloquent plea to preserve this gorgeous stretch of still-pristine river from a likely death sentence of more upstream dams, so that kayakers, roadside viewers, and wilderness lovers can continue to enjoy it.

Normally, fly fishers would rather disown their offspring than divulge their favourite fishing holes. But when the alternative is a diminished or decimated fishery, they're more willing to let the outside world know about this short stretch of paradise. ▲