

NEWSLETTER #3 - MAY 2002

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- A second sea-run brown trout report
- Spring delta striper update – big fish
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- Belize Grand Slam and other permit stuff
- Update on Leland hosted trip availability

This is the third of our monthly newsletters with updates on great fly fishing venues and insight for our traveling fly fishers. We want to help you in your research for your next fly fishing destination – we've been most places and pride ourselves in the ability to research new locations. For the same cost as booking direct we get you unbiased information on timing and locations.

REPORT: BELIZE PERMIT TRIP AND NEW NICARAGUA LODGE:

Just recently returned from two weeks fly fishing in the tropics. The number one highlight was we didn't see another sport fisherman for the entire two weeks – in today's world of crowded fishing venues, that is a strong statement.

The first week was spent on a Belize mothership trip dedicated to fishing for permit to help develop a new crab pattern invented by Dave Ellis (Dave caught his first permit, a 19 pounder, on his first Meca mothership trip two years ago and has been attempting to find a way to get the devils to eat a little more ever since). The most exciting day we had was a day with heavy cloud cover. We could not successfully fish flats which were over two feet deep because the slate gray surface of the water did not allow for much visual penetration. Instead we fished very shallow flats and the ridges between flats and fished tailing fish and moving water only. This area of Belize has great numbers of permit. We had 26 legitimate shots at tailing permit from two skiffs that day– most were singles with some pairs and triples. That's the most tailing activity I've ever seen in many, many weeks of fishing permit in the Yucatan and Belize. Very exciting stuff!!! We found one dumb fish which allowed us a confidence builder before releasing him. Dave and I were joined by the renowned Florida salt water fly fishing instructor and author, Jon Cave, who released a 13 pound fish two days later – also caught while tailing. If you want more details on our trip, give me a call. The crab fly still needs work – needed to make it lighter (and maybe smaller) to fish very shallow flats.

The new Nicaragua lodge, hopefully, is a work still in progress. The location is among the most beautiful sites for a lodge you could imagine. Beach front cabana's, swaying palms, beautiful beach, etc. The fishing, however, needs to be defined and several logistical issues need to be resolved. The "short report" is this is a spot that deserves monitoring to see what develops during the next year (if you want a more detailed report, it's pasted in at the end of this newsletter or give me a call).

ANOTHER RIO GRANDE REPORT: SEA RUN BROWNS 20+ POUNDS: Bob Pauli and Frank Jackson joined with 10 other fly fishing men and women from Texas at a Tierra del Fuego lodge recently. Bob supplied the following catch report for the lodge for the week: 458 fish released, average weight 15 pounds, 31.5 pounds largest fish and 11 of the 12 fisherman got a 20+ pounder (Bob had a 26 and Frank a 27). Bob said that all the fish were taken on small flies with nothing larger than a size 6 productive - #8 and #10 Prince Nymph the most popular. Based on this report and the report from John Gallo last month, one would have to assume that all the concerns down there about a low water year negatively impacting the fishing were ill-founded. In fact, the fish seem to be getting bigger every year reflecting good management of the resource.

SPRING DELTA STRIPER UPDATE – BIG FISH: The following report comes from Mike Costello, a very enthusiastic and experienced delta guide with a loyal following. "The large stripers in the delta are on a feeding frenzy before they head up the rivers to spawn. It's the best Spring fishing I've ever encountered on the Delta with the average size fish going around 8 lbs. and the biggest striper weighing in at 24 lbs. Fifteen to twenty fish days have been common." You can reach Mike at 209-367-5997.

Supporting Mike's comments is Greg Ritland's report on his day with another delta "super guide", Doug Lovell (510-526-1937). Greg fished with Doug this past Monday and gave the boat's results as 17 fish released (over 100 pounds total) with four double digit fish: 10, 12, 15 and 16 pounds.

If you want to check this out, you'd better hurry because it won't be long before the fish begin moving into the rivers in their pre-spawning mode.

ANOTHER NEW ZEALAND OPTION: Many of you are aware that Josh Frazier is leading a trip to New Zealand next February (there are between two and four openings left on this trip depending on confirming one reservation as of this writing). We are going to be putting together a second trip to NZ with a slightly different focus for fly fisherman with a non-fishing spouse. My wife (a non-fishing spouse) accompanied me last December on our exploratory trip. We both want to go back, but I can't encourage her to spend two weeks on a hard-core fly fishing trip. So, we're putting together an agenda that will include half our trip focused on the South Island visiting the alps, sounds and fjords, and other interesting South Island phenomena. We'll stay at upscale resort-type lodges and do a few helicopter fly-outs to fish some beautiful rivers and streams, but the main thrust of this part of the trip will not be fly fishing. After that portion of the trip, I'll convert the second half into a hard-core fly fishing trip. This format could have several different versions and, if you'd like to discuss the possibilities, give me a call.

UPCOMING ANDROS ISLAND WEST SIDE REPORT: I'll be joining Josh, Jim Taylor and a few others on an Andros Island saltwater flats adventure next week. Our objective is to fish the relatively unexplored west side of the island and check out a lodge that might be the best west side option on Andros. We'll have the update next month.

TIPS FOR FLY FISHING THE TROPICS: While spending 3 to 5 weeks a year fly fishing the flats in the tropics, I've discovered I can get by for either a one week or two week trip with two pants - the lightest cotton or synthetic ZIP-OFF-LEGS style you can find. I wear one while traveling and then keep them as a back up while I'm fishing in the other. Long days on the flats in the tropical sun can take a toll on your legs (as well as the rest of your body) if you're not very careful. Having the option to zip off the legs to get some sun and then cover back up when you've had enough is very convenient. A bonus is you can also use them as shorts or a swimsuit. If you get them wet while fishing during the day, just take them in the shower with you and rinse the salt off - they'll be dry and ready to go again the next morning.

GIANT BROOK TROUT OF THE MINIPI RIVER: My son is at it again - the new issue of *Fish and Fly* magazine has a feature story about our experiences with the fabulous dry fly fishing for the Giant Brookies of the Minipi river. One of those beautiful fish is on the cover. For those that have space booked this year on Minipi and those going next year (our "prime time" hosted trip for '03 is already sold out and we're starting a second week) or anyone who has an interest, we'll be putting on a detailed slide presentation for the Diablo Valley Fly Fishing Club on this fishery the evening of May 14 - more details next month.

GRAND SLAM AND OTHER PERMIT STUFF: Here's a story that really puts permit fishing in perspective. The week before our Meca trip mentioned above, there was a family group (father/sons) fishing with Martin McCord. Two of these gentlemen released a permit each with the largest a weighed 22 pounder and they only used a little over a day of their trip pursuing permit. The interesting part of this story is the two men had a total of one-week of saltwater flats experience fishing for bonefish. So much for the value of being an "experienced, permit expert."

A Belize mothership regular, Art Hinckley, usually only fishes for permit on his trips - he's an experienced, permit expert. However, his trip last month had some friends joining him who wanted to also fish tarpon and bonefish. Result: Art scored a Grand Slam (i.e., catching three of the four - bonefish, tarpon, permit, snook - in the same day). Art titled his day a "mini-slam" as his tarpon, bonefish, and permit were on the smallish side.

UPDATE ON LELAND HOSTED TRIP AVAILABILITY: If you'd like a copy of our hosted trip brochure, e-mail me and let me know.

April: Andros Island bonefish trip - sold out

No. Platte Lodge - sold out

May: Casa Blanca, Ascension Bay - space avail.

June: Deschutes River - space avail.

July: Minipi River Brookies, Canada - 2001 has space available

July 2002 is sold out - we're trying to get a second week.

Smith River, Montana - sold out

Dean River, British Columbia - both weeks sold out

August/Sept: Ladies week at Three Rivers Ranch in Idaho - space avail

Sept: Rainbow River Lodge, Alaska, rainbow trout - space avail

Oct: Belize mothership trip - space avail

Nov: Christmas Island, South Pacific - space avail

Feb '03: New Zealand - see above

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,

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REPORT: NEW NICARAGUA LODGE, COCO COHIBA

Idyllic island setting three miles off coast with comfortable beach front cabana's and main lodge. New staff and guides eager to please – guides willing to work long hours even though knowledge and equipment (nets, gaffs, pliers, etc) missing. Good boats and skiffs. Have good reef fishing for snappers, jacks, cuda, etc. on reefs near island. Small reefs protect limited flats on many of the tiny islands within 1- 3 miles of the lodge – saw small permit on many of these flats, but will not be able to sustain much fishing pressure because of the size of the flats. Didn't see any bonefish the entire trip.

May have a good jungle river tarpon and snook fishery in the Pearles Lagoons and Rio Grande River north of the lagoon. I fished one river that had 10 – 50 pound tarpon rolling regularly and, after trying a floating line for 90 minutes without success, switched to lead core and hooked a 15 and 60 pounder (lost the big one after 15 minutes). Also, got two small snook. May be other such rivers in the area that need to be discovered and an understanding of the fishery developed. Pair of experienced salt water fly fisherman that were there during our stay took the four hour round trip (all across open water with the bone crushing pounding and salt spray associated with crossing such water) to fish the Rio Grande River and saw rolling fish, but no takes.

Also, may have other tarpon and snook opportunities in the massive lagoon if the water clears. I was told by some of the locals that when the winds die and rains stop during the "dry season", the lagoon clears and big tarpon follow schools of shrimp into the bays. The "dry season" is supposed to start around mid-January and we were there in early March and saw no sign that the prevailing ocean winds would drop or the lagoon would clear. Maybe in another month or two??? These opportunities need definition that only the experience of a season or two will identify.

Biggest obstacles to a "fun and productive salt water fly fishing experience" are the logistics. The one jungle river that I fished mentioned above was exciting enough that I would have returned to fish it again – except that it took a four-and-a-half hour round trip, most of it through open water. As good as the potential seemed, the trip wasn't worth the effort. Also, every time we left the island, we were in open water – even if we wanted to make a "quick" run to check out one of the small flats on a nearby island.

Logistics to get to Coco Cohiba also provide a challenge as you must overnight in Managua both arriving and departing the country. The boat ride from the airport in Bluefield to the island gives you the first exposure to the pounding you will take from crossing open waters the entire week.

If the prevailing winds die and the seas were smooth, some of the logistical obstacles would become less onerous. However, no one seems to know for sure what to expect for the next three months until the rainy season returns again in late June.

Bottom line: Lot's of knowledge needs to be acquired to gain an understanding of just what the fishing potential could be. Also, some of the logistical issues need to be resolved. There is some potential here, but needs lots of development.

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