



TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

- THE FISH THAT WON
- “FIRSTS” FROM THE SALT WATER FLATS OF BELIZE
- THINGS THAT MAKE ME SMILE ☺
- FATHERS DAY AND *THE HUNT* ?

We are in the sixth year of publishing our monthly newsletter with updates on great fly fishing venues, trip reports and insights for our traveling fly fishers. We want to help you match the right location with your fly fishing goals and objectives and properly prepare you to fully enjoy the experience. We've been to most locations and pride ourselves on our ability to research new sites. One of our services is to compare and contrast different lodges/outfitters. Whatever unbiased information on timing and locations we can provide comes at the same cost to you as booking direct – i.e., NO EXTRA COST.

THE FISH THAT WON



(While fishing with one of our favorite independent guides in the Fiordland area of New Zealand during our 2008 trip, we enjoyed the following experience which captures the essence of what makes this fishery so unique.)

After navigating a few padlocked gates (with permission from the property owner), we walked for about twenty minutes, sometimes through heavy brush, to get to the spring creek in the photos left and below. It was a beautiful piece of water with patches of long, lacy, nymph laden grass strands. After quietly moving upstream for a while, searching for our first target, we saw him. He was finning in about 18 inches of gin clear water, about four feet from the bank and, naturally, under an overhanging branch. It seems that much of the time, the NZ trophies are holding in places that make

a direct, simple presentation impossible. It's either the converging seams in the stream that make getting a drag free drift difficult or an obstacle like the overhanging branch.

By NZ standards, the brown trout we were viewing wasn't a large fish; rather a fish of about four-to-five pounds. We watched him for several minutes as he swayed in the current, moving to his left or right occasionally to grab a nymph of some sort, and once, gently breaking the surface with his lips as he ate. We eased into the water, a smooth, sandy bottom, between the grasses and positioned ourselves about 30 feet below him. The strategy was typical NZ style – we would hopefully place our fly 6 to 8 feet above him, keeping the fly line well behind him and out of his sight line, and let the fly drift back to him. I was fishing my second day with this particular guide and had learned he distained nymph fishing – he would use every dry fly in his boxes before resorting to subsurface....and then only if I twisted his arm.

For the first 20 minutes of our association with Mr. Brown, we would attempt to get our cast under the branch and get a good drift within his range of vision. About a third of our casts succeeded in doing that. Four or five times, he gave a slight upward





movement as the fly crossed over him, once he rose to within an inch of the fly before dropping back down.....and once, he put his lips on my fly before refusing. That rise was a spectacular tease that left my heart racing. He rose in a manner that was so slow and deliberate – it took all the discipline I could muster to not set the hook. During this process, we had changed flies 7 or 8 times to continually give him a fresh look.

After several more minutes, he gave us a thrill as he made a move on the fly that actually created ripples in the surface...but no eat. Immediately after that rise, he moved upstream and we thought he was spooked. However, he settled into a crease between two grass patches and began feeding again, about 15 feet above where he had been. For another 15 minutes or so, he gave us a few more titillating sensations, rising to examine the fly from his new location. Then, he fell back into his original lie under that branch and continued eating.

After a few more presentations under the branch and the realization that we had showed him over 15 different flies of all sizes and shapes, we looked at each other and my guide said, “I think he’s won.” If we continued to cast to him, we were risking that he would get wise to us and bolt upstream, possibly spooking other feeding prospects in front of us. Quietly, we moved back, climbed out of the stream and, giving him a wide berth so we couldn’t be spotted, worked our way upstream to the next fish.

That spring creek provided us 9 or 10 feeding fish. We got three to eat and landed two, both healthy browns a little smaller than the fish that “beat us.” Not a banner NZ day in terms of “catching,” but a day which provided stalking experiences that will not be forgotten, highlighted by that one fish who shared an hour or so with us.

The most publicized attraction of NZ and its crystalline streams is to take a fish like the big brown at right on a dry fly. However, it’s the thrill of “losing” or “failing” several times each day that keeps fly fishers coming back. The brown in that small spring creek in the story above did “win,” but by letting me into his world for that special hour, he also made me a “winner,” even without a hook up.



“FIRSTS” FROM THE SALT WATER FLATS OF BELIZE



When a fly fisher moves onto the tropical, shallow, salt water flats for the first time, usually it’s bonefish that supply the beginner’s first targets. They are the most plentiful and easy to locate of the salt water flats species. And, bonefish provide most of the basic challenges associated with the more exotic flats fish like tarpon or the ultimate fly rod trophy, the elusive permit. After experiencing the thrills (and frustrations) of sight fishing the shallow flats and savoring that first success, usually a fly fisher is never quite the same and eagerly anticipates a return encounter.

In the last few months, several of our travelers have experienced their first successes on the salt water flats in Belize. Additionally, some of our more seasoned anglers have had new “firsts” accomplished.

Jim Nix introduced his fishing friend, John Skvarla, to the flats on a Seaduction mothership trip in Belize in March. They caught an assortment of snook, barracuda, and jacks – Jim jumped a few tarpon (boated one) and had some permit shots, but most notably, John kept persisting in some tough tropical conditions until he took his first bonefish on a fly (photo above).

Kristy and Brad Jacobs, newcomers to fishing the flats, accompanied Terry and Tom Farago on their first Meca trip in early February. They spent some time on Ambergris Cay before boarding the Meca and Kristy took her first bonefish on a fly there. Despite a few days of nasty tropical weather,





Brad (left) managed to take his first tarpon on a fly....in fact, released three “baby tarpon” with a large fish of over 20#. Kristy at right above with a nice ‘Cuda taken trolling on the reef.

Taylor Collins was introduced to the salt water flats while with a friend in Belize for a few days last fall. That started the juices flowing and he was back this spring on a Seaduction mothership trip. Between trips, he spent lots of time practicing his casting skills. This trip saw him have one day with 8 bonefish released, jumped his first tarpon on a fly, got his first barracuda on the fly, and had shots at tailing permit. Taylor’s permit account is similar to most of us when casting to tailing permit, especially first encounters – “we did see tailing permit, although I was so damn nervous that I never really did have them worried.” Regarding spotting fish in the shallows for the first time, Taylor (at right) commented, “Standing on the front of the boat and looking for tails or any movement was the first time I realized that waters can be as different as any topography.”



For reasons that I’m sure are a mystery to even the “fishing gods,” the numbers of permit seen on our favorite Belize flats so far this year have been outstanding. Tom Brutsche, a regular on the Meca mothership in Belize, commented that he had never previously seen the number of permit they did this year. Tom usually spends most of his time looking for tarpon, but this year was focused exclusively on permit. Tom reports their two skiffs had well over 200 shots at permit during the week and Tom recorded his first multiple permit day with two fish released (photo left). Tom humbly credits his guide for the success: “I’ve been fishing with Captain Dean Myers on the Meca annually for the past 7 years. He is an outstanding guide and has become a good friend. If not for Dean, my two permit day would not have happened.”

Mike Droese is a semi-regular Meca visitor, the “semi” part is determined by the growth spurts of his young family. This trip saw Mike accompanied by a few friends including Mike Freeman, who had never fished salt water before. Their first two days provided 10+ bonefish each day (including Mike Freeman’s first bones). Then they moved the Meca south to some permit flats where they encountered lots of feeding permit. Mike D. reported he had over 40 good shots at permit, three hook-ups, and two released (photo right) giving him a career total of six permit caught. Most exciting were Mike Freeman’s first permit sightings which resulted in two fish released (photo lower left) on his first attempts ever!!



From Mike F. on his first trip: “We literally saw 100’s of permit.....the two fish I caught were in 2-3’ of water, tails up and feeding away, which I believe made it much easier to catch them.....what a riot! The Meca experience was great - I will definitely go back again.”

And, as if to prove that the difficulty of hooking a permit on a fly can be overstated, Brian Pitzer was on a Meca trip with salt water fly fishing friends, Terry and Gary Butts. This was Brian’s first flats trip and he spent his time spin fishing. One afternoon, his guide suggested he give the fly rod a try and lo and behold, he hooked a permit on a fly. NOTHING TO IT!! (Note: the fish did come unbuttoned before reaching the boat so there is no photo).

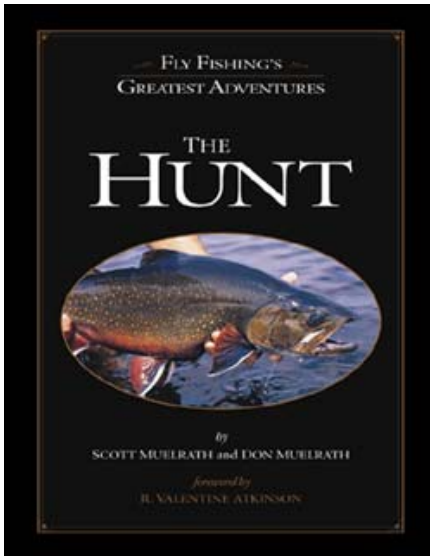
THINGS THAT MAKE ME SMILE ☺

The biggest nightmare and disappointment for someone in the business of being a fly fishing travel consultant is when the “fishing gods” frown and clients encounter tough conditions or uncooperative fish, even in destinations where “world class” fishing is available. It’s unavoidable and happens from time to time. Conversely, the most exciting part of that same business is when clients have fly fishing adventures that not only meet expectations, but exceed them. Upon returning from our trip to New Zealand and Fiji this year, we had the best month ever of exciting client reports from all parts of the globe. With the exception of one Belize trip which was



harassed by tough tropical conditions, we were inundated with wonderful reports and photos from travelers returning from New Zealand, Patagonia, Belize, the Amazon, etc. The “fishing gods” were definitely smiling during the first quarter of 2008 – hope we don’t have to pay the price for their glee in the near future?

FATHERS DAY AND THE HUNT ?



Is *The Hunt* – *Fly Fishing's Greatest Adventures* a perfect Father's Day gift? I don't know, but if Dad loves stalking fish with a fly rod, it may be something he would enjoy.

We've been honored that *The Hunt* has received the following accolades:

- "THE HUNT is one of the great fly fishing classics of all time.....unbelievably good work."
- "...the finest collection of fly fishing photographs ever assembled...."
- "...overall, I'd be taxed to reach for a more enjoyable read...."
- "...I've never in all my years seen anything as profoundly special as THE HUNT.....an absolute masterpiece."

(see the website www.ffhunt.com for a full list of reviews and comments)

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PHOTO CREDITS (top to bottom): banner photo of surf sunset – Jim Solomon; first bonefish photo – Jim Nix; Kristy with 'Cuda – Brad Jacobs; Brad with tarpon – Kristy; second bonefish – Taylor Collins; first permit – Tom Brutsche; second permit – Mike Droese; third permit – Mike Freeman.

Notes on photos: we like to think our newsletter is a good gathering spot for photos of memorable fly fishing experiences, like Jeff Reinke's unique photo of a popper-caught Butterfly Peacock Bass at right. The lighting in this photo certainly makes the gold tones “pop.” Also, note the subtle green tones on the fins, red eye, and crimson on lower fin and under jaw. If you have a photo that you think could fit in this space, submit it – never can have too many great fly fishing photos.



Either phone or drop us an e-mail if you have questions or would like more information about any of our destinations.

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