



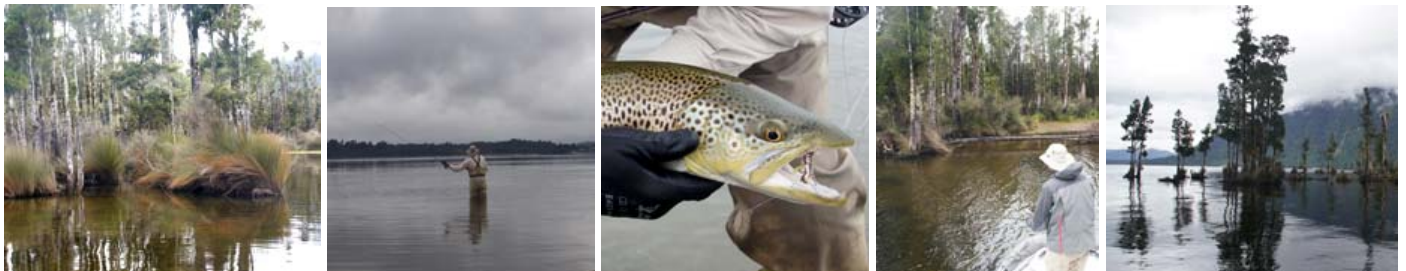
After more than a dozen years of walking'n'wading New Zealand's spectacular streams and rivers, I never imagined that I would spend over a week fishing the stillwaters of Lake Brunner. However, the unpredictable recovery time from dual knee replacement combined with an exciting sampling of this experience on our trip in 2013 convinced me that this could be this years solution to continuing our exploration of the joys of fishing NZ. It certainly proved to be worthwhile.



Any discussion of a fishery usually begins with the fish. In this case, the fish are a given – healthy, 3 to 6+ pound browns, most with a beautiful golden hue to their colors. The numbers are strong – on average during a full day, you'll see about 40 to 50 fish, almost all singles, providing 15 to 20+ good sight casting opportunities. To make a natural looking presentation and avoid spooking fish with a glassy surface, long casts are often necessary.

The structure of the clear water lakeshore presents many various fishing environments. In some areas, the water's edge is lined with tall grass tussocks; other places have drowned timber, sometimes in combination with the tussocks. Then there are shorelines full of sunken logs and some sheltered shallows with a gravel covered bottom. There are shallow coves with all of these elements and deep water shorelines where a mountain drops into the depths. And, for a wading experience, there are rivers emptying into the lake creating large sand bars at their mouths and small streams flowing in at different spots. All these dimensions combine to create a shoreline that has a lot of character.....it is here that the fish are stalked.

Below, left center and center: casting in a river mouth and brown taken in the mouth did not have the golden tones of the lake fish. It was exciting watching those large browns cruise in and out of the tussocks and timber – right center....casting to and being rejected by a cruiser.



Leaning Curve: on my first day, a short four hour fishing session due to our late arrival time, I suffered through a severe learning curve while only releasing one brown, a solid five pounder. We saw over 25 fish and had at least 10 good shots so I had my opportunities. I must admit to some buck fever watching those large browns cruising within a foot of the bank and blew several casts. Also, I had to learn that you could not cast "to the fish" with the slick surface in the sheltered areas we fished – rather, the cast must land far enough away to allow the fish to "discover" the fly. Each day my effectiveness improved.

On two different days, I was joined by friends. NZ veterans who took a day off from walking'n'wading, Barbara and Charlie Renfrew, sampled Brunner releasing 9 fish for the day. On another day, a first timer in NZ, John

Landis, joined up with me for a banner day of “hitting it right” with 18 fish released (a total of over 65 pounds of brown trout – all on dry flies), best day of the trip and qualifies as memorable!

L to R: Barbara with Brunner brown and casting in a river outlet; colorful brown; Charlie (in back) with chunky brown; and John with on of our 18!



There are different versions of “fly fishing guides” who fish the lake. Two I could personally recommend have totally different approaches, both effective. One uses a push-pole powered, comfortable inflatable (in the banner photo at the top and below left) and the other has a customized boat with oars designed especially for Brunner. In my opinion, a “fly fishing guide” who uses an outboard to cruise the shorelines need not be considered.



Logistics: Lake Brunner is located in close proximity to two very popular fly fishing travel routes on the South Island. If you are traveling between Murchison and Arthur’s Pass in the alps, you pass right by the lake. If you are moving north or south along the west coast, you get within thirty miles of these waters.

My time on Lake Brunner was truly an exceptional stillwater experience beginning with the numbers and average size of the fish; but equally important, was the stalking and sight fishing aspect.....watching those big browns slowly cruise over, lift their nose out of the water, and inhale the surface fly was a “world class” fly rod moment!

A detailed day-by-day fishing diary is available in word doc format. If you’d like to see a copy, hit reply and ask.

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

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,

Don Muelrath

Fly Fishing Adventures

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