



## TOP FLY ROD HUNTING EXPERIENCES OF 2008

2008 provided a wonderful collection of exciting stalking and fly rod hunting adventures. Fishing for trophy fish in an environment that allows the visual aspect of observing the fish, the challenge of the well-placed cast, the thrill of anticipating the fish's approach, and in some cases, the culmination of feeling the hook set with the accompanying stress on the rod, is the most electrifying form of our sport. These are the experiences we never forget....that make us smile whenever we recall them. We don't have the space to recollect all the memories that should be reported in this newsletter. It's guaranteed that we will miss many that deserve to be mentioned. We have tried to select the episodes that, by anyone's measure, would qualify as "world class" fly rod hunting experiences. George Toledo, MD, in a recent communication regarding the Giant Trevally stalk he describes below, stated, "I have been constantly dreaming of that moment." It's those "moments" that we search for.



## NEW ZEALAND – WORLD CLASS BROWN AND RAINBOW HUNTING



New Zealand is unique in all the world when it comes to stalking and sight fishing trophy Browns and Rainbows. It's the total scene – crystalline rivers and streams, large fish of 4 to 10+ pounds, the finest guides, captivating scenery, and the ultimate stalking experience for large trout. Add to that, it's a terrific destination to visit even without the fishing, and you have the perfect destination.

Like so many of our destinations that allow for hunting with a fly rod, we could use any of 20 stories from this year that are worthy of this newsletter. But one does stand apart and it belongs to Paul Wilms.

To add to the drama of this story, one must consider that it takes place on the last day of a three week trip Paul and his wife, Betty, made to NZ. The event happened on a helicopter fly out to a North Island stream. Paul recounts what happened: "The day was good consisting of breaking off a number of big fish and releasing some nice ones, including a seven pound Brown and a six pound Rainbow. In the mid-afternoon, my guide and I simultaneously spotted three large trout about 100 feet ahead of us in 16 inches of slow moving water over a fine gravel bed. We crept up to about 40 feet and I started casting to the two fish to the right and my guide stopped me, instructing me to go for the big Brown on the left. The fly landed about a foot and a half to its right and the fish immediately turned and engulfed the fly. The fish was bigger than I expected and took off for deeper waters. I was literally running, tripping, trying to keep my line from snagging on larger rocks while hearing my guide yelling instructions. After 20 minutes and 150 yards downstream, we finally netted the Brown, 29.5 inches x 16.5, measurements that put him over 10#."



Many other exciting New Zealand experiences are recalled in the New Zealand newsletter accessed through this link:

<http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/76.pdf>

## PERMIT: THE FLY RODDERS ULTIMATE STALKING CHALLENGE



There is very little debate that the finest hunting experience in fly rodding is provided by the Permit....and Belize provides more shots at them than anywhere on the planet. When we think of all the exciting reports we have from Belize this year, there are so many great choices for this newsletter. Many of our anglers took their first Permit, first Bonefish or first Tarpon on the inshore flats of Belize during 2008 – certainly any of those “first’s” warrant special applause. Some of our veteran Permit anglers added one, two, or three more Permit to their career totals during this year – all very special stalking moments and worthy of recognition in a recap such as this newsletter.

However, one particular fish, a true trophy Permit, stands out as the fish to represent Belize in this newsletter. Not only was this fish HUGE, but it was also the 50<sup>th</sup> Permit taken by the angler, Art Hinckley. Art and some fishing friends do an 11 day trip annually on the mothership Meca. This venture is dedicated entirely to finding and casting to Permit, a pursuit which requires the ultimate in patience.....and skill. Art, with his 50<sup>th</sup> Permit (at right), has placed himself among a very small group of anglers world-wide to have reached that milestone. When you consider the number of quality fly casters who have spent weeks trying to catch their first Permit, having 50 notches on your fly rod is truly incredible.

This link will take you to a photo essay of pursuing Permit and the other species of Belize using a mothership as your base of operations:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_Belize.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_Belize.pdf)



## AMAZON: THE PEACOCKS OF THE CLEAR WATER AGUA BOA



The Amazon basin encompasses a large land mass, equivalent in size to the Lower 48....and lots of water. Within that land mass are many Peacock Bass operations, almost all of them are brown or black water fisheries geared to the “bassmaster angler” with his level-wind reels or spin equipment. There is only one “fly fishing only” operation and it happens to be located on the clear water Agua Boa watershed. The waters there are protected, a national preserve – no commercial or native netting and only “catch and release” fly fishing for the clients of the Agua Boa Amazon Lodge and Houseboat operations.

The clear water Agua Boa does allow for sight fishing the Peacock Bass and other species. In fact, some clients (passionate purists) only sight fish during their trip; however, for the maximum productivity possible, giving in to blind casting does boost the numbers. This is one of the rare destinations where both large numbers AND large fish can be expected daily.

Like so many other accounts in this newsletter, we could report many exciting bouts with ten to twenty pound Peacock Bass. However, the experiences of Herb Newman (right) and Rex Setzer (above) are very special. Herb and Rex had visited the Agua Boa Amazon Lodge the year before and their results were exciting enough to have them return this year to try a week at the new houseboat operation upriver. Using the houseboat as their base, they really did “hit it right,” taking 27 Peacock Bass over 10 pounds with several in the 13-14# range and a large fish of 18 pounds!!! It should be noted that both Rex and Herb had the advantage of their previous experience the year before on the Agua Boa to draw from – undoubtedly, that was helpful in producing this year’s results. This link will take you to a photo essay put together by Herb about their week:

[Agua Boa Amazon Lodge Photo Journal-Herb Newman](#)



## BIG BROOKIES OF THE MINIPI RIVER



For two consecutive months during the middle of the year, our newsletter was full of photos of beautiful six and seven pound Brook Trout, almost all taken on the surface while fishing from one of the lodges on the Minipi River in Labrador. There can be many different and exciting aspects to this fishery. Our personal favorite is stalking a sipping trophy Brookie as it cruises. The guide provides a quietly paddled canoe as the casting platform while the caster waits for an opportunity to place a fly in the feeding fish's path. The Minipi has been visited, in pursuit of those trophy Brookies on dry flies, by almost every legendary fly rodder at one time or another. This is a true wilderness destination where everything is the same as it was centuries ago – not many places like it left on the planet. The way it was is the way it is.

This summer, the one episode that stands out above them all was had by Paul Wilms (above, right) on Anne Marie Lake in late June. This is the same Paul Wilms who provided the stalk of the big Brown trout from New Zealand, above. We tried to avoid using an experience provided by Paul twice, but we just can't avoid it.

This was the ultimate stalk which lasted a full sixty minutes. There was a nice fish working a mayfly hatch on this one particular bank, about 200-300 yards long. The size of the rings he left and the huge head and shoulders that occasionally showed were evidence that it was worth being excited about the opportunity at hand. His guide, with a quiet stroke of his paddle, powered the canoe in pursuit of the fish, occasionally allowing Paul to get within casting distance and make a presentation. About twenty minutes into the stalk, the fish rose and engulfed Paul's fly, and, for a brief time, the mission had been accomplished....but the hook pulled free. In a few minutes, the fish resumed feeding. After a full hour of being engaged with this giant Brookie, he ate the fly again, and this time, everything held. The prize: a weighed 7.25# Brookie.

Photo essays, reviewing highlights from this summer on the Minipi, can be accessed at this link:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_minipi.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_minipi.pdf)

## GIANT TAIMEN OF MONGOLIA



“Hitting it right” here provides the opportunity to cast to Taimen, the giant salmonidae of Mongolia, in clear rivers and smallish streams. Timing is everything and Chuck Ferrell, Jerry Saltzgaber, and Chip Fuller did it right. The visual excitement associated with watching a 50 inch Taimen charge your fly, creating a huge “V” on the surface as it approaches, in a small, clear water river, is the stuff of dreams.

Chip commented, “The Taimen fishing was great. Jerry and I caught 9 the first day. Top big fish - I had a 47”, Jerry had a 50” and Chuck 50 and 1/2” to win our Big Fish contest.”



If you'd like to see a more complete report on the trip with additional photos, click on this link: [http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_Mongolia.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_Mongolia.pdf)

## ALASKA: COHOS/SILVERS ON POPPERS



The Coho (otherwise known as Silver Salmon) is the premier fly rod target of the Pacific Salmon. There are a few places where they can be taken on the surface using poppers, certainly an electrifying way to catch these silver rockets. However, I don't think I'll waste a lot of time trying to find a spot where chrome-bright Silvers can be taken on the surface, in as great of numbers, as near the mouth of Alaska's Goodnews River or its forks. Of course, this is one of those "prime time" issues – gotta be there during the special August weeks. This is a place where, when your timing is right, it's not unusual to take 10 to 20 acrobatic Silvers on poppers in a morning.

The Silver Salmon is the top fly rod Pacific Salmon for a number of reasons. First, they are readily abundant, especially in this watershed where thousands of fish come in on tide daily. Their runs are very strong in numbers. Second, unlike the other salmon, they take a fly with wild abandon. Third, their average size is second only to the King Salmon, with a fifteen pound fish a possibility on virtually every cast. And fourth, if you value strong runs and aerial antics, they will deliver.

On the remote Goodnews River, there is only one lodge on the river system so the fish don't get much fishing pressure and they don't spook easily. If a group of fish stops reacting to the popper, it doesn't take much effort to find another flat, creek, current seam, or tidewater braid with groups of fresh, sea lice covered fish.

Jeff Reinke (at right), a globe trotting fly caster on a Goodnews trip this August, said he fished for Silvers subsurface with streamers on the first day only. After that, it was all surface fishing and the visual experience of watching the Silvers attack the fly or popper was a thrill. He had 20+ fish days, all on the surface, with fish from 8 to 14# and lots of 10 to 13 pounders.



This link will take you to a photo essay on fishing the Goodnews' Silvers, [http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_AKtrip.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_AKtrip.pdf)

## REDFISH OF THE LOWER LAGUNA MADRE – SOUTH TEXAS

The shallow flats of the Lower Laguna Madre in Southeast Texas provide an excellent environment for sight fishing and stalking Redfish. Barbara Klutinis was there with friends from her fly fishing club, all of them in pursuit of their first Redfish. While there are normally many opportunities at sighted and tailing fish, the BIG RED (below) that Barbara took was special.

Rick, her guide, from his elevation on the poling platform, first spotted this fish over 100 feet away. The flats were about 18 inches deep so a fish this large pushed water and created wakes while it cruised. Barbara captures the excitement of the episode with this rendition:

".....While I could not see it from my lower vantage point, I false cast in the direction of the oncoming fish, playing to Rick's rhythm of where to let my false casts drop. When the fish was at about 35 feet, I let the line drop and the fish took the fly. The fish took off toward an island that was about 500 feet in the distance. The reel was singing, taking my line well into the backing, half way to the island. I was glad I had asked the fly shop to put plenty of backing on my reel! It took about 20 minutes to reel the fish in to where I could get a good look. The size of the fish made me nervous! Would I really be able to hang on to this honker? Just when I thought I could bring it in, as soon as Big Red saw the boat, it took off back towards the island. After 15 minutes more of hard reeling, I was able to bring it to the boat. We were both exhausted, but oh what a beautiful fish!"



This link will take you to a report Barbara did for their club newsletter as well as some additional info from our exploratory trip to South Texas last year:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr\\_redfish\\_klutinis.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr_redfish_klutinis.pdf)

## SEYCHELLES GRAND SLAM



This topic was just reported in the December newsletter, however, we couldn't leave it out of this report as it constitutes one of sight fishing's top adventures. A Seychelles grand slam consists of a Milkfish (at left, the most difficult of the three), Trevally, and Bonefish. There are many versions of this grand slam, but fly fisherman, George Toledo, MD, captured this one and did it in the finest possible fashion as defined by the size of the Milkfish and the Giant Trevally.

Although George is no stranger to salt water flat's Grand Slams, this was his first trip to the Seychelles (he once captured TWO Caribbean grand slams in ONE DAY....Permit, Bonefish, and Tarpon). On the capture of the Giant Trevally....."I spotted the GT next to a cut-out corner of a

reef in 4 foot of water at about 30 yards. I wasn't sure it was even a fish because of its big size, and how it remained suspended motionless despite the close proximity of the boat and motor. I said to my guide 'look at that turtle....or something over there.' The response from the South African guide was 'holy shit, cast now.' After a false cast, instead of leading him, I threw on top of his head and spooked him. He darted sideways and I thought he was gone, but in a split second he did a 90 degree turn and hit the fly as I was stripping half way to the boat. He hit it so hard that he set his own hook and I was very fortunate to steer him clear of the reef. A 45 minute fight in the open water finally wore the 65 pounder out (photo at right)."



For a complete photo essay on our exploratory trip to the Seychelles, including logistics, fishing program, seasons, pricing, etc, click on this link:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr\\_seychelles.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr_seychelles.pdf)

## NORTHERN PIKE ON THE SURFACE



Jim Hine and son, Andrew, timed their trip to the Northwest Territories of Canada to pursue giant Northern Pike on the fly. Although Lake Trout and Grayling were part of the menu, it was the big northern's that were the primary attraction drawing the Hine's to this remote location. Regarding the Pike on the surface, Jim explained:

".....the big fish are often sitting right in the cabbage in less than 3 feet of water. Steel leaders are essential- these fish have razor sharp teeth. The surface strikes are something to behold, these are top of the food chain predators; they literally explode in your face in pursuit of anything that moves.

Over the course of the 4 days we spend pursuing Northern's, we boated at least 100 fish, 40% of which were over 30". A trophy is considered 38" or larger- we landed 8 of those, the

largest at 41". We spent most of our time hunting pike in the bays on the main lake, but for a change of pace we did one fly out."

Access to Jim's complete report on his trip can be found through this link:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe\\_kasba.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/pe_kasba.pdf)

## SEYCHELLES BONEFISH



We're back to the Seychelles for an unforgettable day of wade-stalking Bonefish on the flats (link above under "Seychelles Grand Slam" provides details). Bill Graham and Steve Sterquell produced a truly remarkable day on the Bonefish flats of the Seychelles.

Following a day when they, collectively, released sixty Bones, they decided to each go for a fifty fish day. In the photo at right above, they have a celebratory beer after totaling up 110 bones before 2:30 (sixty for Steve and fifty for Bill). Most were of the 2 to 4 pound variety with bigger fish mixed in including the big Bone pictured with Bill at above left.

PHOTO CREDITS (top to bottom): Big NZ Brown in water and held by Paul – Betty Wilms; NZ Fish On – Rick Radoff; Permit – Art Hinckley; Peacock Bass – Herb Newman and Rex Setzer; Brook Trout (r) – Paul Wilms; Mongolia – Jerry Saltzgaber, Chuck Ferrell, Chip Fudge; Silvers – Gordon LaFortune (l) and Jeff Reinke (r); Big Red – Barbara Klutinis: Milkfish and Giant Trevally – George Toledo, MD; Northern Pike – Jim Hine; Bonefish – Bill Graham and Steve Sterquell.

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  
[www.flyfishingadventures.org](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org)

888-347-4896  
[flyfish@napanet.net](mailto:flyfish@napanet.net)

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