

AGUA BOA AMAZON LODGE REPORT - JERRY SALTZGABER
AQUA BOA AMAZON LODGE
(FORMERLY THE ROYAL AMAZON LODGE)

THE AMAZON JUNGLE & FLY FISHING FOR PEACOCK BASS-- SOMETHING I HAD READ & DREAMED ABOUT FOR A LONG TIME. AND NOW I WAS ON MY WAY—ONLY FIVE HOURS FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO MIAMI, 5 HOURS FROM MIAMI TO MANAUS, BRAZIL, 2 HOURS BY BUSH PLANE TO THE LODGE AND FOUR HOURS UPRIVER BY JETBOAT TO THE HOUSEBOAT. OH, YEAH, ADD THAT IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF CARNIVAL IN MANAUS & WE COULD NOT GET TO OUR HOTEL—CAN YOU SAY “OVERNIGHT IN THE AIRPORT”.

THE HOUSEBOAT IS THE PLACE TO STAY. PLACED IN A DIFFERENT SECTION OF THE RIVER EACH YEAR, IT PROVIDES THE BIGGEST FISH AND NO FISHING PRESSURE AT ALL. THERE WERE FIVE FISHERMEN, THREE GUIDES, TWO COOKS/HOUSEKEEPERS, AND A HELPER. EACH OF US HAD OUR OWN ROOM WITH BATH, THE ROOMS AND DINING ROOM WERE AIRCONDITIONED. FREE LAUNDRY SERVICE DAILY AND THE FOOD/DRINKS WERE GREAT. WE NEVER SAW ANOTHER PERSON THE WHOLE TIME AT THE HOUSEBOAT. IT IS A PROTECTED RIVER.

WE WERE FISHING PRIMARILY FOR PEACOCK BASS (THREE TYPES: BUTTERFLY, SPOTTED AND TEMENSIS). THE TEMENSIS ARE THE LARGEST (5-25#) AND THE BUTTERFLY ARE THE SMALLEST, MOST NUMEROUS (2-8#). IN ADDITION, WE CAUGHT AROWANA (5-15#), PIRANHA (1-5#) AND SEVERAL OTHER JUNGLE SPECIES.

THE RIVER IS VERY CLEAR, WITH A COPPER TINT. IN SOME PLACES THE AQUA BOA IS BIG, BUT MOST OF THE TIME IT BRAIDS INTO MANY SMALL BRANCHES. IT IS SLIGHTLY ACIDIC & THEREFORE “NO BUGS “. THE JUNGLE GROWS THICKLY DOWN & INTO THE RIVER. JANUARY IS PART OF THE DRY SEASON, SO THE RIVER IS VERY LOW & THE JUNGLE IS QUITE DRY IN MOST SPOTS. THERE ARE MANY LAGOONS/LAKES THAT ARE ISOLATED BY THE LOW RIVER. BRIGHT “BEACH TYPE” SAND IS EVERYWHERE. LOTS OF SAND BARS IN /ALONG THE RIVER. IT WAS 90-95 DEGREES DURING THE DAY AND THE 70'S AT NIGHT. THE HUMIDITY WAS SURPRISINGLY LOW/PLEASANT.

LET'S TALK “FISH”. THEY HIT HARD, NO NIBBLES HERE, AND RUN HARD. THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS DON'T TRY TO STOP THE FIRST RUN. I HAD A NUMBER OF FISH INTO MY BACKING ON THE FIRST RUN. THE PROBLEM WITH THIS IS THAT THERE IS A LOT OF TREE ROOTS, ETC., AND THE FISH RUN DIRECTLY THERE FOR THE COVER. MOST OF THE TIME I LOST THE BIG ONES AFTER THEY WRAPPED THE LINE AROUND SOMETHING & BROKE OFF. IF YOU HOOK ONE FISH, MANY OTHERS COME & BEGIN A FEEDING FRENZY.

WE FISHED WITH 8-10 WT RODS (I RECOMMEND 9 OR 10 WT), BOTH FLOATING AND SINKING LINES AND STRIPPING BIG STREAMER FLIES. POPPERS WORKED, NOT AS WELL AS STREAMERS, BUT IT WAS REALLY COOL TO SEE THE AGGRESSIVE FISH COME OUT OF THE WATER AFTER THE POPPER. WE USED 4 FOOT 20-30 POUND TEST LEADERS. MOST OF THE FISHING WAS OUT OF BOATS, BUT I DID GET SOME WADING EACH DAY.

WE BROKE 5 FLY RODS—AS WELL AS LOST 7 FLY LINES AND MANY PIECES OF SINK TIPS TO PIRANHA (THEY LOVE TO BITE FLY LINE).

OUR LARGEST FISH WAS 18 POUNDS. ONE DAY IN 6 CASTS, I CAUGHT 14, 13, 12, 10 AND 9 POUND PEACOCKS. ONE OTHER AFTERNOON IN 2 ½ HOURS, I CAUGHT 3-14'S, 2-12'S AND SEVERAL 10 PLUS POUND FISH. I DID NOT KEEP TRACK, BUT I THINK 50-75 FISH DAYS WERE AVERAGE. IF YOU WANTED TO CATCH 3-5 POUND FISH, 100 PLUS WAS POSSIBLE.

PIRANHA WERE VERY ACTIVE IN SOME SPOTS. THEY SHREDED YOUR FLIES, CHOMPED YOUR LEADER AND RUINED FLY LINES. THEY DID NOT BOTHER YOU PERSONALLY WHILE WADING, BUT I MUST ADMIT, I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS.

WE CAUGHT AROWANA, AN UNUSUAL LOOKING FISH (SEE PICTURE) THAT RUN 5-15 POUNDS AND FOUGHT LIKE A TARPON.

THERE ARE CAYMAN EVERYWHERE. ONE DAY I WAS FISHING FROM THE BOAT & AN 8 FOOT ONE KEEP COMING CLOSER EVERYTIME I CAUGHT A FISH. I HOOKED A PEACOCK THAT DID A LOT OF SPLASHING. IT WAS MORE THAN THE CAYMAN COULD STAND. HE CHARGED THE BOAT JUST AS I WAS PULLING THE FISH OUT OF THE WATER. IT COULD NOT STOP & ACTUALLY RAMMED INTO THE BOAT. IT SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME. MY GUIDE JUST LAUGHED, GRABBED MY FISH, STILL ON THE LINE, AND TEASED THE CAYMAN WITH IT.

HAVE YOU EVER REALLY HAD YOUR BUTT KICKED BY A FISH? WELL I DID---JUST AS I WAS AT THE END OF THE STRIP & PREPARING TO LIFT THE FLY OUT OF THE WATER, A BIG PEACOCK TOOK THE FLY. IT RAN DIRECTLY UNDER THE BOAT, TOOK MY FLY ROD AGAINST THE SIDE OF THE BOAT(MY LAST FLY ROD—I BROKE MY 9 WT THE FIRST DAY) AND HEADED ACROSS THE BIG PART OF THE RIVER. IT TOOK ME TOTALLY BY SURPRISE AND IT WAS A WHILE BEFORE I GOT THE ROD AND THE LINE OUT FROM UNDER THE BOAT AND SET UP TO FIGHT THE FISH. THE REEL SCREAMED, THE FISH KEPT GOING RIGHT INTO THE TREES AND BROKE OFF. I WAS COMPLETELY IN A DAZE. THE GUIDE WAS LAUGHING & SAID THAT WAS A REALLY BIG ONE.

THE LANDSCAPE WAS VERY FLAT, BUT THERE WERE A FEW ROLLING HILLS & A SMALL MOUNTAIN. IT WAS DRY NOW, BUT MOSTLY UNDER WATER DURING THE RAINY SEASON. I WAS AMAZED AT THE AMOUNT OF SAND—IT COMES FROM THE MOUNTAINS DURING THE RAINY SEASON.

WE SAW MONKEYS, BIRDS, SMALL ANIMALS AND CAYMAN. THERE WERE JAGUARS AND SNAKES AROUND, BUT WE NEVER SAW ANY.

I LOVED THE TRIP AND WOULD RECOMMEND IT TO ANYONE. ALL OF US SAID THE HOUSEBOAT OPTION IS THE WAY TO GO. DON MUEL RATH (FLY FISHING ADVENTURES, NAPA, 888-347-4896) SET UP THE TRIP FOR THE FIVE OF US.

JERRY SALTZGABER

TRIP REPORT
Fly Fishing Adventures
888-347-4896
flyfish@napanet.net

