

NEWSLETTER #45 - FEBRUARY 2006

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Leland Fly Fishing Travel Newsletter, February 2006

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We are in the fifth year of publishing our monthly newsletter with updates on great fly fishing venues 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.

THINGS YOU NEVER FORGET

We pursue fly fishing looking for those special experiences that stay forever frozen in our memory. Fly fishing in New Zealand presents more of those opportunities than anywhere in the freshwater world, in addition to being a fabulous place to tour and vacation. We just returned from our annual trek to New Zealand and, yes, there are new memories. Most memorable on this trip was an episode with a large brown trout finning in about 12 inches of gin-clear water. The guide and I were positioned about 40 feet behind him, watching him glide gracefully to the left and right, eating whatever nymphs was flowing by. Occasionally, his lips would break the surface and sip a dry. This is very cool, just watching. Besides, if you JUST watch, you can't blow the cast. However, my guide finally said, "well...." The cast is not good and my size 14 Blow Fly lands about four feet to his left, just a few feet from the river's edge in water about 6 inches deep. Just as I let out a moan of frustration, that brown bolted to the left, his back out of the water and half his head visible as he inhales the fly. A heart-stopping sight! The hook is set and we begin chasing him downstream. After prying him out from behind a few boulders and 200 yards below where we originally stalked him, the scale was out. A beautiful, full bodied, hook-jawed male, just under 8 pounds. Only in New Zealand! If you'd like to discuss the details of our trip, give a call or e-mail me.

TRIP REPORTS – Yucatan Baby Tarpon, Playa Blanca ("couples" and bonefish), Alaska's Finest, Belize Permit

Note: Space doesn't permit reprinting these reports in full so they are condensed versions. If you'd like to see the full report, just hit "reply" and ask for a copy.

Lots has been written about the new baby tarpon fisheries that are being developed on the mangrove shorelines of the Mexican Yucatan. John Shields and Chet Walker were there in mid-January and John had this report: "...over four days we jumped 20 tarpon, catching 10, plus one nice snook. The major problem was the weather, as a cold front blew in the day we arrived with 25-30 mph winds from the North. While the fishing was slow, the accommodations were outstanding...the town of Campeche is fascinating, clean, safe, and historic. While we were disappointed with the fishing, the experience was fun, and I believe with the right conditions, would be an outstanding trip. However, in Jan/Feb, the weather risk is high." This operation is sold out most weeks from March through May.

Sister lodges on and near Ascension Bay, Casa Blanca and Playa Blanca, have a world renowned reputation for bonefish and permit. The lodges have different personalities, with Playa Blanca having a beach and other amenities that have made it a flyfishing destination for couples. Julie and Don Whitmore, along with two other couples spent a week there in January.

Don's report: "Playa Blanca is a good couples destination, the girls had fun and enjoyed it. The food was good as was the fishing (mix of three sunny days and three overcast days). We caught lots of bones and had shots at permit and tarpon. If a spouse didn't fish, it would be a very relaxing place to spend a week and completely unwind. It did meet and exceed my wife's expectations."

From Howard Hopkins on his trip with his wife to Bristol Bay Lodge, one of Alaska's finest: "The best way to say it is that it exceeded our expectations. Top-flight people and great fishing. We will do it again."

From Pat March on fishing from Martin McCord's Meca mothership for permit in Belize: "The last trip we took with Martin on the Meca was one of the most enjoyable we have ever taken and we can't wait to get back. We would like to book the Meca for a 12 day trip using the new permit itinerary departing from Placencia and ending up in Belize City."

LELAND'S AT THE MARIN FLY FISHING SHOW – THIS SATURDAY

The Marin Fly Fishing Show (this Fri, Sat, and Sun) is the one fly fishing ONLY show in the Bay Area. Our Leland shop will have a booth at the show with several show specials available. I will be there on Saturday with a Belize presentation at 12:30 in the Destination Theatre and will be in the booth the rest of the day Saturday and available to discuss travel destinations and itineraries. If you're planning to be at the show, stop by and say "hi."

NEW ZEALAND FANTASIES – JIM TAYLOR AGAIN!!!!

Jim Taylor owes.....he owes the "fishing gods" a lot....and then a lot more. Based on his experiences in New Zealand the last two years, Jim should get blanked on his next ten fishing trips to even things out. But no matter what, they can't take away the excitement Jim has experienced in New Zealand the last two years, this years trip actually topping his exceptional '05 trip.

How do you quantify "New Zealand fly fishing fantasies?" While the overall challenge and thrill of stalking and sight fishing the large browns and rainbows of NZ is not measured in numbers, it does take numbers to explain Jim's results. On a 14 day itinerary, Jim fished 10 days, releasing a 7 pound or larger trout every day but one. However, his best day surpasses anything I'm familiar with – 13 brown trout between 4 and 7.5 pounds sight-fishing a smallish tributary stream, ALL ON DRY FLYS!!!!

To read those numbers would lead one to believe that these big fish are EASY. Not so. Big fish in skinny waters are extremely challenging, testing all an anglers skills – especially the wary brown trout. In New Zealand, the weather can always be an issue, creating tough conditions. While Jim's angling skills have been honed to a fine edge on his four New Zealand trips, he has benefited from the "fishing gods" smiling on him....however, they will get even – they always do!

THRILL OF "HUNTING" WITH A FLY ROD DEFINED

As this is written, Barbara and Charlie Renfrew are on an extensive fly fishing itinerary in New Zealand, fishing most of the Kiwi's top waters from the top lodges and with the best guides. However, before they left, Barbara sent me this review which captures the essence of our new book, *Flyfishing's Greatest Adventures – THE HUNT*. "THE HUNT combines the romance of fly fishing and practical knowledge, information on the different fish and the destinations coupled with the excitement of the hunt. Ever since Charlie and I took up fly fishing, I have wondered why a couple of college graduates find it overwhelmingly exciting when a fish takes the imitation bug we have presented. THE HUNT has explained it to me. It is far and away the finest book on fishing, both the photos and the text, that I have ever read." THE HUNT is available at www.ffhunt.com.

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,

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