

NEWSLETTER #52 - SEPTEMBER 2006

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We are in the fifth 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.

PATAGONIA.....IN THREE PARTS

The question “what is Patagonia?” is one I hear often. Patagonia is a loosely defined general geographic area that encompasses the southern parts of Argentina and Chile. From the fly fisher's viewpoint, it includes three different environments: the Chilean Fjords, the Chilean Andes, and, in Argentina, the pampas and eastern side of the Andes.

This is the first of three articles defining those different sections of Patagonia. We'll start with the western-most of the three, the Chilean Fjords. If you look at a map of Chile, you'll see hundreds of small islands just off the coast. Those islands create the Fjords of Chile. Many of them have their own rivers and streams created by springs, rainfall, and, in some cases, glacier melt. While the fjords themselves are salt water, there is lots of fresh water entering them via the aforementioned waterways.

The fly fishing targets in the fjords consist of rainbows, browns, and silver salmon. These fish roam the fjords, entering fresh water from time to time. Several of the rivers have good numbers of trophy sized fish, but not all hold fish – and some only on certain days when the whim of the fish cause them to enter the fresh water. It's this unpredictable nature of the fishery that is both exciting and frustrating. During our two weeks exploring the fjords and its streams, we found rainbows as large as the 8-10# range. We did take several browns also, but while I'm certain there are large browns in the fjords, we didn't release anything over four pounds. Sometimes we found concentrations of large fish in a river and sometimes streams that looked like they would be sure to hold fish held nothing but pretty water. Fishing river mouths was often productive as were certain flats where giant rainbows could be fished like bonefish on the right tides.

A wonderful spot to base yourself for a fjord fishing adventure is the Puyuhuapi Hotel and Spa. A 3 or 4 day stay here is a terrific complement to a week at an Andes fly fishing lodge and a real hit with non-fishing spouses. The fishing program is limited to four anglers per week from Puyuhuapi so reservations usually need to be made far in advance during prime time. (DVD on the Puyuhuapi Hotel and Spa is available – just hit reply).

NEW ZEALAND: WHAT'S NEW AT PORONUI RANCH

There has been a lot of speculation over what would happen with Poronui Ranch, one of New Zealand's world class fly fishing lodges, ever since it was put up for sale by the original owners. Lots of rumors

were flying around. I met with the new owners last week. What's new with this 18,000 acre property is basically all good. The new owners are Westervelt Sporting Lodges from the USA. They have been able to renew all their leases to water on Maori land and even extended the length of the key leases – no accesses to water have been lost as the rumor-mill was spewing out. They have added some other non-fishing activities such as heli-wilderness hikes on private land and kayaking. Plus, they now have available a fabulous “New Zealand style” private home on property for rental to families or small groups (this was the home of the previous owners). Bottom line is Poronui will continue to offer an outstanding experience to match the reputation it has built over the last six years as one of New Zealand's finest operations.

FANTASY STUFF: ALASKA AND BABINE STEELHEAD

This column reports on those special fly fishing experiences that happen when you hit it just right and have one of those special fly fishing moments or days you'll never forget – i.e., fantasy stuff.

From Alaska - what can happen when you hit it just right in the later part of the season in Alaska, the prime time by most Alaska traveler's standards? This is from guide Greg Schuerger, one of Putah Creeks finest guides, while fishing with a client in the famous Bristol Bay area of Alaska. How 'bout a day where you release over 30 rainbows that averaged over 23 inches each? Hard to imagine....but it happened recently.

From the Babine River in BC comes this trophy steelhead experience from Loren Irving. Loren has taken monster steelhead on the Babine before, fish in excess of 20 pounds, but his latest lunker was taken on a dry fly, a Black Bear Bomber tied by Pierce Clegg. The fish was 39.5 inches long with a 20 inch girth (best guess is 20-22 pounds). Loren reports, “the fish devoured the fly in fast frothy water at the top of a run and went just nuts across the river, bellied line, and jumped three times....What an incredible experience. I am a lucky guy.” Yes, you are Loren, with memories of that fish sailing through the air frozen forever in your fly fishing memory.

TRIP REPORTS: FERNIE AND THREE FORKS RANCH

Our “trip reports” section this month carries more comments from two destinations in the West that have received 100% positive endorsements from clients this summer – the Fernie area of eastern British Columbia and Three Forks Ranch in Colorado.

First from Fernie comes this condensed report from Tom Patterson: “The trip to Fernie worked out great. I ended up staying an extra day. The fishing was really good and Jeff was a great guide. It worked out very well for my interests and skill level.” Fernie offers a great mix of venues from drift boat trips on the Elk River to walk-n-wade on the smaller tributary streams. It is an ideal spot for someone to hone their fly fishing skills with the aide of guides who are outstanding teachers.

There is a downside to these ongoing outstanding reports on Three Forks Ranch – the popularity of the experience has lead to an “almost sold-out” situation for next summer. The only spots open as of this writing for more than two days are 6/30 – 7/5 and 9/6 – 9/10.

From Lem Cragholm who was there in September with his son: “It met the lofty expectations I had. In terms of accommodations, service, fishing, it was as good as it gets. Food and wine very good as well. We had a great time.”

Jim Taylor made his first trip to Three Forks this summer and has two slots booked for next year. This globe-hopping fly fisher has seen a lot and has nothing but praise for the overall Three Forks Ranch experience: “Plenty of beautiful private water with lots of 4 to 6 pound fish. Fishing for all skill levels.

Five star cuisine with outstanding food. First class operation from beginning to end and everything in the middle. Only negatives are the price and getting space.”

“SAN FRANCISCO DAY” – TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

If you are in San Francisco, we have scheduled next Tuesday, October 3 as our next day in the City. To view a list of the slide presentations we have available, go to our website www.flyfishingadventures.org Under the link for “Newsletters/Trip Reports” is the list of slide shows. I am available by appointment to stop by your office or home for discussion and/or slide presentations from our library. Also, I’m available to get together for a cup of coffee almost anywhere in the City.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“One of the great charms of fly fishing is that of all the sports, it affords us the best opportunity to enjoy the wonders and beauty of nature.” The Lady Bugs Fly Fishing Club

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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