

OCTOBER NEW ZEALAND REPORT – JOHN PART

(John reports twice yearly on his October and April trips to New Zealand. As a regular in New Zealand, he has gained some notoriety for having taken more than 45 double digit brown trout. He writes an outstanding report that captures the essence of stalking trophy trout in New Zealand. In his report below, he alludes to a “mouse year” – in NZ, every 4 to 6 years, all the elements in nature line up just right to provide an abundance of small rodents. When those years occur, the fish add heft from dining on the extra protein and some exceptionally sized fish are taken. Those conditions were supposed to exist this season....we'll have to wait a few months to see if it actually happens.....more later.)

First, the big news is that the “mouse year” hasn't started yet, but all the pieces are in place. The lodge cat brought in her first mouse just as I left, but it needs a nightly row of little mouse corpses to signal that it is under way. I'm hopeful that my April trip will see some trout with aldermanic stomachs full of mice.

Nevertheless the trip was successful. I had a full knee replacement in late July, and was worried that the knee might not stand up well. But it did. At 75 I now have both knees replaced and one hip. My planned trips to fish New Zealand have given me a double incentive. The first, to take advantage of knee and hip replacements to prevent my quality of life slowly deteriorating with pain and stiffness. The second is the determination to do the necessary remedial physiotherapy to get me out there again. From my own perspective there is nothing like a compelling interest (such as flyfishing) involving physical exertion to get us to take better charge of our lives.

We shortened the day's beat lengths. Scotty kept an eye on me crawling carefully over the rocky areas, but the extra time it took me to join him at pools gave him time to spot fish that were well concealed, and that he said he would have passed over without the extra time to concentrate on the 'honey holes'. So we really got nearly as good of results taking extra time as I would have expected had we moved at a brisker pace. A good lesson learned.



Our best day was a stroke of real luck. First visitors (so it seemed) to a high country stretch of river known to hold big fish. We ended the day with 13 fish, 3 in double figures and 4 more over the trophy threshold of 8lbs. The best fish was taken at the very top of the last pool of the day, and went 13lbs (at left with John).

Earlier that day we fished without success for a truly awesome fish. It swung in the fast current of the pool, dominating the food supply and shouldering aside two smaller fish that kept it company. I caught one of

these smaller fish. He went 10 1/2 lbs! I'll see the big black backed. fellow in my dreams in the dark London winter. How big? Certainly in the upper teens of pounds, and that is without the benefit of mice!

But all the fishing was great, large and small (well, not that small, just a handful under 4lbs). Some 90 trout over 13 days. One day the fish take relatively freely, another they feed steadily in front of you and ignore a string of artificials. Scotty has even been driven back to the text books to find a subtler colour and shape mix to add to his already huge fly selection. Brown trout are endlessly fascinating. Occasionally suicidal, frequently just bloody minded.

As you know, I just can't speak highly enough of Scotty as a guide. I have fished with many guides, from Alaska, through Mongolia to New Zealand. He has been head and shoulders above the others, and a great companion and friend as well.

John Part