



Sunrise Snook Hunt, Belize



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We are in the eighth year of publishing our monthly newsletter with updates on great fly fishing venues, trip reports and insights for our traveling fly fishers. We've been to most locations and pride ourselves on our ability to research new destinations. 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.

SNOOK EXPLORATORY TRIP, BELIZE

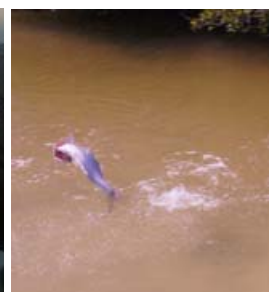


When anglers think of Belize, the species that usually comes to mind is tarpon and permit, and to a lesser extent, bonefish. The finest permit flats on the globe are located in a 50 mile stretch of waters inside the shelter of the Belize barrier reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world. Since the late 80's, we've been fly fishing Belize. In fact, it was in Belize that my son, Scott, and I made the transition, over a period of years, from spin fisherman to salt water fly fishers.

Until five or six years ago, we spent very little time fly fishing for snook, preferring to chase the glamour species, tarpon and permit. Slowly, we began to spend more time on our trips casting to the mangrove edges for "ole linesides," the snook. The fact that the best time to fish the mangrove edges was the lowest part of the tide made it a good option when the tide receded. Our attention on snook increased as we had some memorable moments like a "15 snook afternoon" and our first ten pound fish. Later, we were able to hook into a monster of well over 20 pounds that put up an incredible fuss on the edge of the mangroves trying to secure the safety of the roots – until he pulled the butt section of my leader off the fly line.

For years, the Belize guides have been telling me that if we wanted to fish for snook, we should come in Nov, Dec, and Jan when they were in their spawning mode and the numbers were the strongest. Well, we finally decided to give it a try and William Owens, Paul Wilms, and myself booked the Rising Tide, a comfortable 58' mothership, to be our headquarters in the first week of December.

If you'd like to see the complete photo essay report of our trip, this link will take you to that report of our exploratory adventure http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/Snook_Belize.pdf



In addition to fishing some of our familiar snook haunts, we explored rivers and shoreline we've never seen before. We covered an area basically 30 miles both north and south of Belize City. In the northern most extreme

of our ventures, I encountered a “snook bush” that far surpassed anything I’ve ever seen and was the highlight of our week. A stretch of about 50 yards of mangroves held an incredible number of snook and baby tarpon. We released 20 snook and 3 baby tarpon in a few hours from that amazing 50 yards of mangrove edge and hooked at least twice that many. Of course, the usual amount of marine wildlife, like the young salt water crocodile below, was present.



Baby tarpon (left below) were a by-product of our snook search. Since they frequent the same environments as snook, it was unavoidable to find and hook some of them.....over 30 baby tarpon were jumped during our week. The 58’ Hatteras, the Rising Tide (right, below), was our floating home for the week. As usual, she provided a comfortable, air conditioned headquarters for our adventure.



FLY FISHING PHOTOGRAPHY 1A – THE SPECIAL SITUATION

On rare occasions, all the most desirable elements come together in a certain situation and there is the opportunity for the “perfect fly fishing photo.” Since one of the great benefits of our fly fishing passion is that it takes us to the most spectacular and pristine natural environments on earth, it is not surprising that we encounter some very special photo situations – a time, place, and situation when we can capture an image with our camera that is worth enlarging and mounting on our walls for our own enjoyment, if no one else’s. Even rarer is the moment where an image can be captured so dramatically that someone else will actually want to publish it.



In the photos above, one thing they all have in common is good light; bright sun, but not necessarily mid day sun. Morning sun and afternoon sun offer an angle of sunlight that is more attractive than mid day sun. And there are times where cloudy or dark skies can produce interesting lighting effects. All three have a series of interesting elements coming together in one place. On the left, the caster is targeting bonefish on a shallow

flat....light in the shallow water in the foreground is interesting, the palm trees add a touch, and very important is the contrast of the boat and angler to the background. The middle one – did we get lucky! In this spectacular New Zealand river valley, the mountain tops were dusted with snow the night before we got there; I couldn't have paid enough to drop those wispy clouds in. The Eastern Idaho shot on the right has obvious elements at work; what doesn't show because of the small size is the fly line in the air is very visible against the shadows in the lower right (the reduced size of this image really hurts the overall impact). Gray's Sporting Journal liked this one enough to make it their cover photo – actually, they use an “inside the front cover” as their cover photo.

When you recognize that you have a special situation where all the right elements are present, keep shooting. Try a different angle, shoot both vertical and horizontal if the situation allows, try a polarizer if you want to get real creative.....just keep shooting. You may end up with one of the images being just a slight smidge better than the others and sometimes that slight difference makes a big difference in the overall look.

The “best of the best” as far as fly fishing photography situations is when both the scene and the fish are perfect – a special fish and a special scene. The photos below represent a scene like that with a Jack Crevalle from a beach in Ascension Bay. The first photo on the left shows that there is potential for something very special....next, tried a horizontal and caught a few more waves. The third is almost perfect except the anglers face is too hidden. The fourth is a BINGO – everything perfect. Can see the anglers excited smile and he's awash in the rolling surf, rod and reel prominent and the fishes eye is in sharp focus – the late afternoon sun is perfect.....and.....

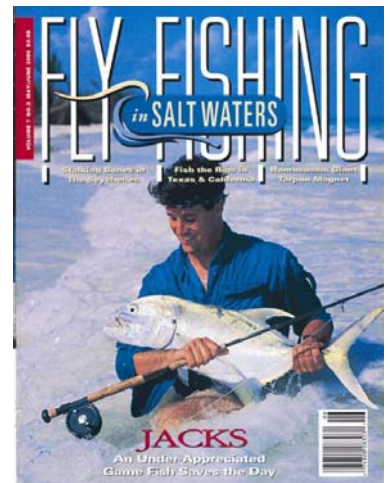


.....someone liked it well enough to put it on a magazine cover (note they changed the shirt color to match their masthead).

Making fly fishing photos that help us keep our best fly fishing memories fresh in our minds is fun and personally rewarding. It deepens your enjoyment and provides another challenge to add to your time on the water. And, there are times when the fish aren't cooperating that the camera may find some things to play with that are more interesting than the fish at that moment.

DEATH OF FELT SOLED BOOTS

It appears that felt soled boots are heading toward extinction. If I was advising someone who was purchasing wading boots, I would encourage them to buy something other than felt bottomed boots (there are a few major manufacturers providing an alternative to felt soles). The issues surrounding felt soles began with the spread of the invasive algae, Didymo, to the pristine streams and rivers in New Zealand. It was determined that the algae entered NZ in the soles of felt boots.....the felt provided an environment where spores of the algae could stay alive for long periods of time. In return, NZ sent over to the USA some of its minute crustaceans (tiny snails) that imbedded themselves in the felt soles of boots returning to the USA. These snails are raising havoc with insect life in waters they infect. New Zealand has had a ban on felt soled boots for a few years. Now Alaska has joined in and banned them from their waters. I'm sure more bans are coming.



LOOKING FOR PARTNERS: GIANT BROOKIES OF LABRADOR, BELIZE AND THE AMAZON

Minipi River, Labrador: We return in July of 2014 for the 9th time to pursue the giant brook trout (below) of the Minipi River in Labrador. We may have room for one or two rods to join us. Like many special fisheries in the world with a narrow window for their best hatches, this must be booked far in advance for the prime time.



Belize: The variety of shallow water species in Belize produces trips with different emphases. Using a mothership as your base of operations allows the best access to the different options. We have small groups or singles looking to have someone join them on trips with different focuses as detailed below:

- **Tarpon emphasis:** this group is on their first Belize mothership trip and will focus on tarpon. There is a chance they may move south for a few days in pursuit of permit. Need one or possibly two more to round out the trip.
- **Snook:** this trip has a focus on snook and will take place during the prime time when snook are in their spawning mode (Nov, Dec, and Jan) and more fish available.

Amazon, Peacock Bass: This is the only true “catch and release” fishery in the Amazon for Peacock Bass. A great fishery and a true adventure in the wilds of the Amazon at a top “fly fishing only” tropical jungle lodge. Single looking for a partner.

FEBRUARY MEMORY PHOTO

It seems as if we hear a lot about Giant Trevally and see a lot of photos of those monsters. The Bluefin Trevally gets very little attention as it doesn't grow to the sizes of the GT's. However, the Bluefin is a great fly rod fish and the blue tints make it a beautiful creature. Bill Pihl makes our memory column again this month with a super photo of a spectacular Bluefin he took in the Seychelles.

PHOTO CREDITS: many of the photos in the snook article are from the camera of William Owens.

Either phone or drop us an e-mail if you have questions or would like more information about any of our destinations.

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