



## Travel Newsletter April, 2009

Pecos River Stalk



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We are in the sixth 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.

### BELIZE: REPORTS FROM NOVICES AND “OLD SALTS”



These two Belize reports cover a wide spread of backgrounds and experience levels. The only common thread is that both salt water flats reports came from using the Meca mothership as a “floating lodge” to pursue the varied shallow water fishing options inside the second largest barrier reef in the world. One report comes from four guys who embarked on this Belize salt water flats adventure without any previous casting experience. The other report comes from the opposite direction, from one of the most skilled fly fisherman we know, Art Hinkley. Art is a member of a very small group of fly fishers who have taken over 50 permit on a fly (for those not familiar, the permit is the ultimate fly rod hunting experience – for a variety of reasons, the most challenging quarry to take on a fly).

#### NOVICES IN BELIZE

The March newsletter referenced four guys who were departing on a Belize trip with totally untested and untried fly fishing skills. Two of them, Mickey Myhre and Craig Trask, had taken several casting lessons and practiced the skills they had learned, but had never been on the water with rod in hand. Both were determined to successfully pursue the excitement of hunting and sight casting to the shallow salt water species, primarily bonefish, tarpon, permit, and snook. They were joined by Dave Simington and Jeff Cordill. Excerpted from Mickey and Craig's well written and detailed reports (available below), these comments capture the essence of their quest, both the frustration and the victories, of learning how to be a fly rod hunter, pursuing and capturing with a fly the fish of the salt water flats.



From Mickey's report: “.....The first two days were trying, but Dean, our guide, patiently reinforced what we were doing right without making us feel bad about what we did badly. Dean later described our initial casting as “beating the water with a mop.”.....Truth be told, we started out awful, thought we were good by day two, but we improved immensely each day. By trip’s end, it was fairly routine to drop flies into ten inch slots in the mangroves for snook, forty feet off.....Did we catch boatloads of fish? Nothing that'd qualify for fish porn movies, but we caught bonefish pretty easily when we could see them, each caught tarpon on a fly and other fish, but the quality of the trip has, in my book, nothing to do with the fish count - to me, it was beautiful casts on those lovely silent flats which made this one of the most richly rewarding experiences of my life.....the trip became magical, dreamlike, wonderful for me. I'm so glad we went I can't begin to tell you.”



Meca at anchor



Jack Crevalle



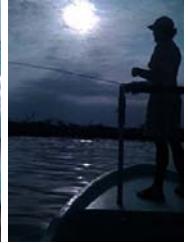
Big Bone



Carol The Cook



Barracuda



Casting At Dark



Craig focused on the tarpon experiences: "What an unbelievable adventure we had on the Meca. I'll never forget the excitement of our very first time leaving the mothership in the skiff. Just 15 minutes out, as we rounded the corner at St. George's Caye, having no clue as to what's next or where we're going, and never even having cast a fly on water, Dean, our guide, pointed at an empty sea like Captain Ahab, saying only one word...‘Tarpon’ The setting was spectacular, with calm, flat, water so clear it looked like the boat is floating on air, two feet above the sea floor. At first we didn't see the fish. I was looking several hundred yards out on the horizon. Then suddenly, only 50-75 feet from the boat, a 50 pound tarpon gracefully rolled on the surface. All the lessons I had taken in the park and weeks of practice on grass didn't help this situation at all. I was so excited.....I never got the fly in the water. Within five seconds of being ‘on deck,’ I had stripped line wrapped up in flip flops, the fly was snagged on my shirt sleeve, and I was waving the rod around like I was signaling a rescue ship. It took ten minutes to get me untied. The tarpon was gone..... By day three we had caught some bonefish, and were casting with good accuracy and far fewer ‘operational issues.’ The next time we cast to tarpon....the outcome was different. I made a 75' cast into the direction the tarpon was swimming. I never saw him hit the fly, but what a blast it was (Craig with that tarpon at left).”



Thanks to Mickey and Craig for relating their experiences of rapidly overcoming the challenges of developing salt water flats casting skills. After learning the basics prior to departing on the Belize trip, their progress on the water was amazing. To see their entire reports, click on this link or paste it into your browser:

[http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr\\_novicebelize.pdf](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org/Newsletter/tr_novicebelize.pdf)

#### THE “OLD SALTS” AND THEIR PERMIT



Actually, I'm probably in trouble for referring to Mike Bertoldi and Art Hinckley as “old salts” – not really old or very salty.....but they are salt water flats veterans. Mike and Art were on their annual permit pursuit in early March. They depart from Belize City on the Meca and slowly work their way south to Placencia, hopping from flat to flat, fishing what many believe to be the finest permit flats in on the globe, most of them not practical to access from the mainland. This trip was especially productive for Art (left and right with permit) with 16 eats and 8 permit released giving him a total of 58 lifetime permit, a fly fishing accomplishment that puts him in a very small club. Here are some

excerpts from Art's trip report:

- “A funny story happened on the second permit I caught. It was on for several minutes and I was reeling the fly line backing connection through my rod when the knot connecting my fly line to the backing came apart and my fly line took off into the water. I was standing there stunned, but luckily our guide, Dean, was quick thinking and started up the boat and chased down the fly line. I held the line while Dean strung the backing through the rod and then we quickly knotted the two together. About 5 seconds after we were done, the permit took off on another run so we were lucky with our timing.....On the next flat I caught a nice tailing fish while wading. It was a little over 15lbs.....”
- On our last full day, Mike saw a lot of fish and caught 2 and had another one hooked, but it came off after a couple minutes. He was quite happy. The morning was slow for me. I only got one shot, but I hooked a big fish that Dean and I both thought was bigger than the big one I caught last year (aprx 30#). Unfortunately, it came off after it ran about 30 feet. It was quite depressing. Right before lunch I got another good shot at a 25 lb.+ fish that ate my crab, but unfortunately I was brain dead after the disappointment of the first fish and did a ‘trout set’ on him and didn't hook up. I figured I would have nightmares about those two fish until my next trip.
- We had a good trip.....overall the weather was good. It was very windy most every day except for a couple, but it made the permit less spooky. I would say on average we saw less permit than a normal trip. Each of us probably averaged 6 or 7 shots a day, but the permit were in an eating mood.”



## ROCKIES SUMMER OPTIONS: NEW MEXICO AND COLORADO PRIVATE WATERS, AND FERNIE, B.C.

If you're looking for a 3 or 4 day outdoor experience built around fly fishing this summer in the Western US or Canada, there are many options. We favor the destinations without the overcrowded conditions found on most of the "famous" rivers in the West. Three of those Rocky Mountain options are highlighted in this article, two of which offer private waters and one that has regulations limiting the pressure on the water.

### PECOS RIVER RANCH

The southern range of the Rockies extends into Northern New Mexico where the Pecos River Ranch is found. Our long term readers may remember our exploratory trip there a few years ago. We found it an exciting fishery in a small river, southwestern environment, but shied away from recommending it because there were some ownership issues beyond our control. Now, we've worked out an arrangement for this season (actually details are still being finalized as of this writing) with an established outfitter/guide. Basically, the package would include 3 or 4 days fishing on private water streams, two of those days guided on the Pecos River on the ranch (at right and banner photo above) and another one or two days on an outstanding, small stream in the area. Albuquerque would be the entry airport.



This 250,000 acre ranch straddles the border of both southern Wyoming and northern Colorado. It simply is the finest fly fishing lodge operation in the lower 48, bar none. It starts with the quality of the fishing which includes, to quote a well traveled client of ours, "more 20+ inch fish than I've ever caught anywhere." Over 16 miles of private access, easily waded, insect-rich, streams are available, including the South, Middle, and North Forks of the Little Snake River. These are waters that have undergone the most extensive stream restoration program anywhere creating a picture-book string of riffles and pools. For the most part, these streams are 25-50 feet wide and provide challenges for every skill level of fly fisher, from beginner to the most experienced. Everything about this operation could be termed "first class ranch style" with service and accommodations to match. Since they completed construction of their new spa complex, it's become even harder to get space. However, there are still a few open slots available for this coming season. Pricey....think in terms of the finest Alaska lodges, but an experience to match the price.



### FERNIE, B.C.

The Elk River watershed and some accompanying streams and rivers in the area have become one of the top western options for our clients for the last few years. The reasons:

- wonderful options from drift boat trips on the main stem of the Elk River to small stream walk 'n wade.
- spectacular setting on the west slope of the Canadian Rockies.
- fishing options ranging from large numbers of dry fly oriented native west slope cutthroat (below left), trophy rainbows in a few rivers within driving distance of Fernie, and the finest remaining Bull Trout (below right) fishery. Great for new fly fishers and veterans alike.
- accommodations ranging from hotel rooms, comfortable "jet-setter" condos, to Island Lake Resort (below center) in a world class setting.
- regulations and permitting controlling the numbers of rods allowed on the water – won't feel like part of a crowd! Not private water, but at times, it comes close.



Other Options: Of course, there are many other options in the West. For something very different, there's an outfitter arranged pack trip into the spectacular eastern Sierras. We work with an outstanding packer, the same

one who took my Dad, brother and I into the eastern Sierra's over 45 years ago. A four night, three day trip built around an overnight float trip through the South Fork of the Snake River Canyon and one day of private water fishing in Idaho is a popular choice. There are places in B.C. where, if your timing is right, you can have 100+ native rainbow trout days, all on dry flies. And, there are still a few lodges in the west where a great outdoor adventure, with good fly fishing as its centerpiece, can still be found. It all depends on what your objectives are and how much is in the budget – we tailor programs to meet your objectives.

## ALASKA NEWS AND 2009 NEW ZEALAND NEWSLETTER – COMING SOON



With the recession in full swing, there are a few open slots at some of the top Alaska lodges than normally aren't available due to amount of repeat clients they usually have. If Alaska may be in your plans this summer, let's discuss some of those options.

Within the next week or so, we'll be sending out what has become our special annual New Zealand newsletter. If you have any interest in New Zealand and its unique stalking and sight fishing for trophy browns and rainbows in its crystalline rivers and streams, you may find it interesting. This advance notice is provided in the interest of not filling up your mailbox with what you may consider junk – if you have no interest in New Zealand, just hit delete when you see it.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Thanks to Jim Hine who submitted this quote from Mark Twain along with his deposit for the Amazon hosted trip next January: "20 years from now you will more regret the things you didn't do than the things you did."

## APRIL MEMORY PHOTO(S)

Theresa and Steve Morgan become the first Mr/Mrs to be displayed in our memory photos section together. Obviously, both Theresa's 40 pound catfish and Steve's 19 pound peacock bass were taken in the Amazon, both on "fly fishing only" Agua Boa River.



**PHOTO CREDITS:** (top to bottom) Belize - Mickey Myhre, Craig Trask, Dave Simington, Jeff Cordill, Art Hinckley

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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