

## EARLY SEASON (SPRING) REPORTS FROM NEW ZEALAND

By Chuck & Polly Longworth

There are two primary advantages to a spring (Oct, Nov, and early Dec) trip to New Zealand over the summer season favored by many. First, there's not many fishermen in NZ at that time and reserving time with the top lodges and independent guides does not require booking 10 or 12 (or more) months in advance. Second, those big fish are "fresh" as they haven't felt the pressure they will see later in the season. The disadvantage is the weather can be more unstable.

The October/November reports below should not create an exaggerated expectancy – the typical NZ day consists of stalking 12 to 20 fish, getting four or five to eat, and releasing one or two – albeit, maybe the brown or rainbow trout of a lifetime. When you "hit it right" in NZ, the results truly are the stuff of fly fishing fantasies and some of these reports are just that – "fantasy days."

The "godfather" of all the North Island guides, Dennis Ward, reports a day last week on his "farm" (a 15,000+ acres expanse owned by Dennis and a partner) when the fish were aggressive and on the surface. Result: over 20 fish averaging 5+ pounds taken on dries!

A recent in-trip e-mail report of a "fantasy NZ day" with one of our favorite independent South Island NZ guides captures the essence of the upside and downside of the early season: "...weather had been good (until today) with a lot of fish on the surface at times. We just had two consecutive days of big spinner falls that had fish sipping casually in the foam lines. Yesterday, we took 12 browns between 3 and 6 pounds on dries and lost another dozen or so. Today, it snowed about 2 inches...."

Jerry Okikawa just returned from a combination NZ touring/fishing trip with this report:

"My partner and I just returned from fishing the south island of New Zealand for 4 days with a local guide. I have never hired a guide before to fish, but I can honestly state that I enjoyed this experience, spotting fish, and landing 20 - 25 fish, all 3 - 5 lbs. I'm sure that you are aware of the terrain's natural beauty. The experience of just seeing the country in addition to fishing made it a great trip."

(note on booking New Zealand – I just tried to finish off an itinerary for two couples traveling to NZ in February of 2008, fourteen months from now. We had to adjust their scheduled plan because one of the lodges we wanted to book was full for two of the nights we needed and one of our favorite independent guides was also taken for the dates we wanted. If you want to go to NZ in February, plan very, very early to have all the best options open.)

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