



Stalking Permit, Barrier Reef, Belize



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We are in the fifteenth year of publishing our monthly newsletter with updates on the 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.

**TWO GRAND SLAMS MAKE A WEEK**

“.....at one point on the day of my second Grand Slam, we had Permit to the right and Tarpon in front of our panga and my guide, who was poling the boat, asked me which one we should go for. I missed the cast for the Tarpon.” For Michael Berard, he didn’t miss a lot this week in which he landed two Grand Slams while using the Rising Tide in Belize as his floating lodge. This was year 14 for Michael and this group of friends, making at least one Belize mothership trip each year since 2004. Over the years, they have had great trips and tough trips, but have always had a good time. Michael said of this trip: “Best fishing we have had in three years.

L to R: one of Michael’s Grand Slams – note the Belikan beer on the deck to right of tarpon



From late evening card games, long fishing hours, to the annual trip trophy, this group of North Carolinians’ know how to have fun while living on the sheltered waters inside the world’s second largest barrier reef. They live up their trip with a contest that awards points for each of the many different species available in Belize. Also, there is a cash pot for the guide who acquires the most points. The perpetual, revolving trophy (at right) is engraved after each trip with the winner and he gets to keep it until the next trip.

For their first several years, their trip focus was on the variety trip pursuing the multi-species



that can be found in certain areas of the Belize waters – tarpon, permit, bonefish, snook, barracuda, etc. Then, for a few years, the dedicated permit trip became their choice. A few years ago, in the month of September, they had their best permit trip, releasing 17 permit which, at the time, set the record for a mothership permit trip (the record is now 23 permit on one trip). This year, they opted to fish the variety waters further north – the two grand slams seemed to justify that decision. Although not fishing the “dedicated permit” route, they did see lots of permit – Michael commented: “Also, I missed several shots at 20+ pound permit at the reef.” Amazing photo of the Belize reef (above left) taken from a drone.....very seldom is the reef seen this calm – usually there is surf rolling over it’s top.

In spite of the two grand slams, Ray Styons used a big last day fishing the less glamorous waters and docks around Belize City to take a bunch of snook and outpoint Michael. Combined with a permit and several bonefish, Ray got his name on the trophy. From Ray: “.....a beautiful weather week and chances at some of the biggest permit I’ve ever seen. I look forward to having my name on the trophy...it only took 10 years! It does seem a little weird, though, given Michael’s ‘Slam success.’”

Below: Ray’s permit and one of his snook flank the Rising Tide at anchor under a full moon



## THE “PART REPORT” ON NEW ZEALAND

(Twice a year, we are proud to bring to our newsletter THE PART REPORT on New Zealand fishing. The report below is written by John Part who, for the past 16 years, has been a twice-a-year visitor to New Zealand, preferring to take his trips in the very early (Oct) and very late (Apr) season each year. He is an outstanding trout angler who has a passion for stalking brown trout in NZ. He brings a sense of reality to his descriptions of stalking the trophy browns of New Zealand. John has achieved a degree of notoriety by releasing 70 browns that weighed in excess of ten pounds, plus an additional 180 trophies between eight and ten pounds. Below left, John with one of his large browns.)



“Back from my April trip to the northern third of New Zealand’s South Island. My umpteenth trip with the same guide who’s become a real friend. It’s here that the brown trout reign supreme, with their cunning and caution (and sheer bloody mindedness) undimmed by the more impulsive rainbows.

The start of my trip was unusual. Three days’ fishing for one fish, including a day in the high country where the big boys are found. Well, a sage agent had advised me at the start of my New Zealand adventures not to be disappointed if I ‘lost’ a third of my days, usually to weather conditions. So noting that it was a La Niña year, I settled in to enjoy what sport I could. In short, I adjusted my expectations accordingly.

If I’d been on a four or five day stay, I’d have had a pretty disappointing experience. But after this, things improved and over 9 days we had three days with 11 fish each day, and never less than 8, with two double-digit fish, and 10 browns between eight and ten pounds, all ‘trophies’ in New Zealand terms. Guides at the nearby competitor lodge recorded blanks.

So to expectations; the curse of much longed for fishing trips, and the bane of guides and sporting agents. The top third of New Zealand’s South Island is probably the best place in the world to catch wild trophy browns on



small nymphs, and sometimes dries. But they don't give themselves up lightly. Not even if you've spent squillions of \$\$\$ getting to the far end of the earth, and fishing (maybe by helicopter) out of a lodge with 'experienced and world class guides' (show me a lodge that advertises less!) And further, not even if you've learnt to fish a light line and long and fine leader - 18 ft or more - into a light breeze, and then do precisely what your guide tells you to do.

To start with, you've got to make sure you get a guide who's capable of putting you reliably over trophy water that is fishable that day (given water conditions, wind strength and direction, sunlight or lack of it, who's smacked it over recently etc etc). That's where your agent comes in, with his or her relationship with the lodge proprietor. Get a mediocre guide, and, guess what, your experience will likely match the guide's caliber. So talk with your agent about your expectations, and be honest about your skill level and experience. It's worth a few lessons in your home country to up your game as necessary. Success in Alaska does not relate to succeeding with these wily browns.

Then, spend long enough with one guide in one place to establish a relationship, and to have a reasonable chance to overcome adverse weather. A four day stay is not likely to be enough. Besides your quality guide won't want to take you to a water holding large fish if he or she thinks you're unlikely to be able to handle them.

So, if it's your first time in this brown trout country, maybe use your first trip to explore, and find the location and guide you can work with. Discuss your aims. A ten pound brown on a dry fly (not a cicada pattern, but a real dun) is a tough ask. On a nymph, reasonable, but it will take effort, a fair skill set, a big slice of luck and accepting low numbers of fish. But if you're determined and realistic, together with your guide, you may crack it. It's a wonderful feeling. A bit like it must feel to ski that 'impossible' steep powder snow slope most others avoid."

### DIARY OF A PERMIT FISHING TRIP

So, what is a dedicated permit trip? What happens.....how many fish do you see? How many are in a catchable situation? What is the flow of the trip like?

Recently, we were on a Rising Tide trip in Belize. This trip was focused entirely on permit and covered the finest permit flats on the globe. The guides and I teamed up to keep accurate records of how many flats we fished daily, how many fish we saw, how many tailing fish we encountered, etc etc. If you'd like to see our diary for the trip, click on this link: [PERMIT TRIP DIARY](#)



### WHERE ARE THE FISH?.....FLY ROD HUNTING FOR TROPHIES – PART ONE

Where are the fish? Conditions are perfect, weather couldn't be better, but where are the fish!!? Maybe you've fished in this same place before, with exactly the same conditions, and found many trophy targets to cast to, but on this day, when everything seems perfect, no fish are in sight.....where are the fish?



If you have spent any amount of time hunting for trophy fish with your fly rod, you have asked this question. Maybe you've spent a pile of money and taken a lot of time out of your busy schedule for this particular pursuit. You'd been told this was a "trophy fishery" and have seen photos that seemed to back up that statement, but WHERE ARE THE FISH!!?

So many situations I have witnessed personally over the years, often in places I have fished several times, and I'm asking the same question – where are the fish!!? Following are two examples that I have lived through, several times in these same locations.....you'd think an answer (or at least a reasonable guess) would come to mind.

We're on the Minipi River, a place my son, Scott, and I have fished several times in the last 16 years. This is the world's premier place to take a trophy brook trout of 5 to 8 pounds (above, left) and a few of 10#. You don't fish here to rack up large numbers of fish – you come for the opportunity to take the brook trout of a lifetime, hopefully on a dry fly. On one afternoon and evening, large, freshly hatched brown drakes are covering the surface. The water is glassy smooth. As you look around you, within a few hundred yards, you can see rings of moving water created by large, rising brookies. You have a fabulous day of stalking these fish using a silent, guide-paddled canoe (photo - below, right); truly one of fly fishing's greatest experiences. You miss most (some

bad casts and some good ones), but you manage to release a few true trophy brook trout. Three days later, same place, same conditions, all those brown drakes littering the surface.....and not a fish in sight. Where are the fish!!?

About a month ago, I'm in Belize pursuing the agonizing permit. One day, conditions were really not very good (shifting wind directions, heavy overcast); however, on that day we poled across eight different flats and counted seeing over 120 permit and half of them were tailing.....an incredible staking scene you have to experience to appreciate. Was lucky enough to have two of them eat and released one at the boat. Three days later, on those same



quality permit flats, conditions WERE perfect, tides favorable, and we could not find ONE FISH, tailing or not! (detailed diary of this trip available above).



So.....WHAT'S THE DEAL? Where were the fish? After years of fishing these same waters and experiencing the same phenomena, you would think that you could discover an answer to that question.....or at least a few reasonable theories. Sorry, I don't have the answers....and have some theories, but every time I develop a theory, it often gets shattered during the following few days. Guess it is just part of the mystique of fishing for trophy fish.....it's just part of the game!

## WHAT WE DO AT FLY FISHING ADVENTURES

This is a link with a description of who we are and what we do.....also, listing the destinations around the world that we can provide reliable information regarding the experience and how to prepare for your visit:

[Fly Fishing Adventures - About What We Do](#)

## MAY MEMORY PHOTO

This Golden Dorado was so huge, they couldn't fit all his face in the photo. Augie Bustoski took this monster fishing some of the best large golden waters in Northern Argentina.....fishing with maybe the finest large golden guide on the globe.

PHOTO CREDITS: banner photo – Marte Muelrath; Two Slams – Michael Berard and Ray Styons; aerial drone photo – Michael Berard; NZ brown – John Part;



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