



Hiking To Native Golden Trout Country



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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.

PURSUIT OF NATIVE GOLDEN TROUT

The golden trout is native only to the upper Kern River basin in California's Tulare and Kern Counties, in the southern Sierra Nevada mountains. It is found only in clear, cool waters at elevations higher than about 7,000 feet. Mike McGuire and a few friends embarked on an adventure into this high country wilderness to try to catch and release all three subspecies of the golden. What follows are excerpts and photos from Mike's complete report on their pursuit of a true native species of trout.



“As we began our research and studied topographic maps of the area which showed the different streams and rivers that held all three subspecies of golden trout, we realized this would not be an easy endeavor. The part of the Little Kern River that was in reasonable proximity to the other waters was on the opposite side of the Great Western Divide. This is a north-south running range of peaks towering to eleven or twelve thousand feet over the Kern River.

We started from Mineral King, an alpine valley on the south side of Sequoia National Park. The route, starting at 7800' went south up and over Farewell Gap at 10,600' to the Little Kern watershed in the Golden Trout Wilderness area.”

They fished and hiked along small streams and rivers with names such as Little Kern River, Coyote Creek, Golden Trout Creek (above), Rattlesnake Creek, and the upper Kern River. The trip began by hiking over Farewell Gap (photo at left) where they could view the Little Kern watershed in the background. Next photo - Little Kern golden recovering after release. At right, Golden Trout Creek fish.



The upper Kern River (center, below) was just one of the inviting streams they fished....."pool after pool invited a cast". The three golden trout amigos (at right) were Gary Trott, Rocky Ferraro, and author, Mike McGuire.



Their trip had many twists and turns, but they were successful in taking all three subspecies. Mike's summary comment: "It was one of the toughest trips I have done in recent years, but a great satisfaction to this 67 year old with a metal hip joint." If you would like to see Mike's story with all the details, this link will take you there - <http://www.peninsulaflyfishers.org/Default.aspx?pagelid=1410593>

Personal Note: Over 50 years ago, my Dad took my brother, Dave, and I to the high Sierra's for a rugged mountain wilderness experience. We were both in our mid-teens at the time. The scenery was spectacular and, while we were novice fisherman, we did take several brilliantly colored Golden Trout and many small brookies. In the following five years, we returned three times, sometimes using pack horses. Fond memories of those trips were rekindled when viewing Mike McGuire's photos and reading his rendition of his pursuit of the Golden Trout Grand Slam.

REPORTS: TARPON, SNOOK, BONEFISH AND PERMIT

The following reports point to the variety of shallow water salt water species available in Belize and the Si'an Ka'an biosphere on the Mexican Yucatan. Bonefish are present, sometimes in good numbers in some areas, but for the experienced salt water flats angler, the bonefish here are a secondary target while the majority of the attention is focused on permit, tarpon, and snook. For large tarpon, the Belize fishery provides the best opportunity while baby tarpon are found in both areas. The Si'an Ka'an biosphere encompasses Ascension Bay and, to the south, Espiritu Santo Bay. Combined with the northern half of Belize, all of this fishery is found within the 200 mile coastline which connects them. (photo at right pictures the coastline south of Espiritu Santo Bay and just north of the Belize border)



BELIZE

Tom Brutsche, Ron Knowles, and Lee Lewis have made an annual pilgrimage to Belize on a mothership for the last eight years. This year, absent Lee who had to miss due to last minute family health issues, Ron and Tom focused on permit, spending their time south of Belize City. Tom (at left) released his 15th and 16th permit on this trip. Ron joined a very small group of anglers who have taken three permit in one day.



Comments from Ron: "Another great trip in the books! The mother ship trip is the ultimate for relaxation. Catching permit is the bonus. I have enjoyed every trip for the last eight years regardless of the fishing. I did get five (largest was 14#), but should have had 2 more larger fish.....one nice fish broke me off because the line jumped the reel and another one just came unhooked after a long fight about 40 feet from the boat. As usual, the accommodations and staff were superb. Already counting down to next year."

Note: permit fishing has been outstanding from the mothership Rising Tide in the last few months. The last two trips that went south from Belize City and focused on permit, (March and April), released 16 fish total and had several more shots.....a fish a day released.....permit fishing doesn't get much better than that!

ASCENSION BAY – SI'AN KA'AN BIOSPHERE

John Gans and Bruce Hurd visited Grand Slam Lodge on the northern edge of Ascension Bay. Grand Slam is the finest operation on the north side of the bay (the sister lodges, Casa Blanca and Playa Blanca, have that reputation on the southern side of Ascension Bay). John, who has also been to Casa Blanca, commented on the lodge, "Grand Slam is well run. Food was good (not great). All the rooms were very nice."

John (left with nice bonefish below and right with baby tarpon) said they took 5 – 7 smaller bonefish most days, plus baby tarpon and snook. Bruce took the 15# snook in the middle.



Regarding his snook, Bruce had these comments on the experience: "The snook came out of the mangrove edge while we were casting a purple tarpon fly to a pair of baby tarpon. After the take, the snook turned tail and tried to streak back to the mangroves. Fortunately, we were rigged with a braided tarpon leader, and I was able to muscle the monster away from the mangrove edge."

Bob Woznicki was leading a hosted trip sponsored by the Fish First Fly Shop to Ascension Bay and took his largest permit (at right). Bob has released over 20 permit to date so this was a special fish!



ESPIRITU SANTO BAY – PLAYA BLANCA



Playa Blanca was the destination that Mark Wilson and John Siegfried returned to this spring. It's location is a few miles down the beach from its sister lodge, Casa Blanca, and is on the northern edge of Espiritu Santo Bay. The photo at left shows the location with the beautiful beach and the bay opening up on the left side. Also, in the background, you can see some the mangrove tarpon lagoons. Mark had this description of how they feel about the Playa Blanca experience: "Guides, accommodations, and food are great. Playa Blanca has it down. Multiple shots at bonefish, permit and tarpon happen almost daily. I guess the fact that I just signed up for my third trip in three years says it all."

John is the guy that described jumping a large tarpon on a mothership trip in Belize a few years ago with this phrase: "It was like a chrome motorcycle was dropped from the sky." His colorful descriptions bring a smile. There are several areas where baby tarpon can be found in the Si'an Ka'an biosphere, but sometimes large migrating fish wander into these bays and lagoons. John found one of those, about 80 pounds worth, got him to eat, and built a personal relationship with that fish. He was under-gunned with a 10 weight rod and relates the story: "?!?!?! I had an 80 pounder on for about 45 minutes. Hit me at 20 feet away from boat. To the boat twice. Guide touched leader, both times. He was tired, so was I. Into the mangroves 3 times - terrified me. Very unsettling. Great experience. Everyone was yelling to keep reeling. They were not holding the rod! I thought rod going to snap or leader pop. Rod under gunned, but who knew this was going to happen? Five jumps and five bows to the King. Chased with boat once, if done more times maybe I would have landed him. My cute little 10 wt rod was screaming 'I'm for accuracy casting, not lifting'." After all that, the hook pulled loose and the final photo was not obtained.....happens often with large tarpon.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

From Warren Parker relating to a few days of frustrating permit fishing: "Hope makes a good breakfast, but a poor supper."

PUBLISHING FLY FISHING PHOTOS IN OUR NEWSLETTER

One way to enhance the overall experience of a fly fishing adventure is to learn how to capture the essence of the trip with a camera. Why does this add to the enjoyment of the trip? Here's the reasons we feel this is so:

- the obvious – having good photos allows for sharing with friends and vividly recalling the experience for your own satisfaction.
- provides a creative challenge to fill the time when the darn fish aren't cooperating and fishing is slow.
- personal satisfaction of capturing memorable scenes and incidents forever. Fly fishing generally takes place in the most beautiful places on the planet – many of those scenes and fish are worth recording.
- its fun and rewarding to see your photos published somewhere, especially if you are really trying to capture the best photos possible.



We enjoy providing a place to publish photos taken by our readers. And, publishing those photos also serves the purpose of adding to the value of our newsletter by sharing other fly fisher's experiences.



What is needed to publish in our newsletter? Of course the obvious – interesting fish photos, either the angler holding the fish or the fish alone (like large Minipi River brook trout at left) without the angler. To create a small photo essay, the golden trout trip photos submitted by Mike McGuire above provide a good example of what's needed. They include a selection of different fish photos, the scenery on the area visited, the waters fished, and the fly fishers. Ideally, you can capture a photo or two that encompasses everything in one photo – i.e., the scenery, water, and angler fishing in the scene.....something like the photo at right above of the angler wading and casting in the Little Minipi River.

There are many examples in past newsletters of very interesting “complete” photo essays using readers photos.....many of our readers have developed good skills at capturing fly fishing photos. John Landis and his group provided a great example of the photos needed for a “complete” photo essay of their Chilean Patagonia trip.....if you'd like to see what photos comprise a “complete” photo essay, his link takes you that photo essay published in the April newsletter - [Chilean Andes Photo Essay Report](#)

MAY MEMORY PHOTO

That's Maria Mazura with a beautiful Giant Trevally (GT) taken in the Seychelles at the most established of the operations in this area, Alphonse and St. Francois Lagoons. Maria is a regular at Alphonse Island and holds the record for the largest GT taken there. There's more to this story. The details as well as some further Seychelles info will be coming in the June newsletter.

PHOTO CREDITS: banner photo – Mike McGuire; golden trout photos – Mike McGuire; 1st permit – Tom Brutsche; Ascension Bay photos – John Gans; 2nd permit – Bob Woznicki; angler wading the Minipi – Bill Hudspeth.



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

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,

Don Muelrath

Fly Fishing Adventures

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