



Stalking A Tailing Permit, Belize



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We are in the ninth 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.

NEW ZEALAND: THE NEWSLETTER AND THE 10# BROWN TROUT



As a steady diet in New Zealand, the three to six pound fish is pretty much a constant. Having a day where you stalk and sight-cast to 15 or more of those 3 – 6 pound guys and release five or six is a memorable day, one you have to experience to really appreciate. A ten+ fish-netted-day with fish like that is VERY SPECIAL. Every year when we return to New Zealand, I am reminded just how exciting a wild NZ brown of five-plus pounds is in moving water. The 10+ pound browns are still available – maybe not in as great of numbers as 20 years ago, but they are there. When you're looking down the back of one of those monsters feeding in 18 inches of water, it can give you a severe case of buck fever and may cause heart failure.

Anne and Andy Baxter were on their second New Zealand itinerary this year. That's Anne at left with a monster, double digit brown trout. Anne survived whatever “fever” was produced by stalking that fish.....had enough poise to make the right cast and presentation. She could do modeling for a premier fly fishing magazine! Our annual New Zealand newsletter will be out next month. It will feature some other ten+ pound fish, and exciting highlights of visiting/fishing NZ.

PERMIT – SEVERAL “FIRST EVER” EVENTS

Not often is “hitting it right” and permit fishing mentioned in the same story, but this article is unique..... “hitting it right” CAN happen, EVEN with permit fishing. The proof is here:

THREE “FIRST EVER” PERMIT ON SAME TRIP

This from a Rising Tide mothership trip in Belize in February that was the standard “variety trip” (to differentiate it from the “dedicated permit trip” that heads south focused entirely on permit), had three fly rodders all take their first permit on the same trip. L to R below: Rod Squires, Jeff Wellington (got two fish), and Denny Mohan.



“FIRST EVER” PERMIT PINK HAT

From the Belize trip that Ryan Hawks and Jamie Connolly referenced below in the new fly article, Mickey Myhre earned the “pink hat” by taking the first permit of the trip.....two versions of Mickey below and an underwater shot of his fish.



THREE DAYS AND NINE PERMIT

Ryan Hawks (right releasing permit) stopped off in Ascension Bay on his way to Belize and really “hit it right” taking nine permit, most caught on a crab pattern that he created himself.

NEW RISING TIDE PERMIT RECORD IN JUST FOUR DAYS

As this is being written, Art Hinckley, Dennis Banks, and Brad Jackson are on one of their two annual Rising Tide permit trips. I received a phone call from Belize two evenings ago to let me know they had already set a new record for Rising Tide trips with 18 permit released in just four days of fishing. On their trip last September, they took 16 fish and fell just one short of the record. The record was 17 fish on a September trip a few years ago. With a new record assured, it will be interesting to see if the fishing gods will continue to smile on this trip for the remainder of their time.....or will the controlling powers “get even” in their last few days?



CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN BELIZE AND ASCENSION BAY

In the last several years, we’ve seen new laws and “no kill” conservation efforts put in place in both Belize and Ascension Bay to protect the permit, bonefish, and tarpon. Based on the results that we can monitor in both places in the last few years, it would seem that these efforts are paying dividends in the numbers of fish being taken and released.

“NEW” FLIES THAT WORK

I must admit to being a little slow on the uptake regarding a recently “discovered” shrimp imitation that has been successfully fooling the “unfoolable” permit. The fly is the Avalon fly. Ryan Hawks recently was joined by four others on a Rising Tide mothership trip that did the southern route totally committed to permit fishing. They hit a cold front which had the fish turned off.....this report from Ryan: “A cold front settled over us for four days and the permit were in a really bad mood--except for Mickey's fish (pink hat above), not a single one would even look at a crab fly. The magic bullet was definitely the Avalon fly. It was developed by a Cuban guide for permit and is actually a shrimp pattern and you fish it stripping rapidly. It is the epitome of ugly but the permit loved it.”



On the same Belize trip, this from Jamie Connolly: “The two fish I caught didn’t hesitate & inhaled the Avalon fly almost as soon as it started to sink!” And further from Jamie on his experiences using the fly in Ascension Bay: “I’ve hooked at least 24 permit in Ascension Bay on the Avalon in different conditions.”

From Fish First fly shop manager, Leo Siren: “This is the fly I caught two permit in one day in Ascension Bay. The guides really

like the fly and it seems to be a top producer.” If you have trouble finding them, Leo’s fly shop is now carrying them.....(510) 526-1937.

For those fly rodders patient enough (or is it “dumb enough”) to be permit veterans, having an alternative to the crab pattern that we can actually strip rather than wondering if the crab fly is spinning or turning over as it sinks and putting the fish off is a welcome addition to the fly box!

WINSTON MOORE - QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Over 20 years ago, my son and I attended a seminar on fly fishing for permit in Belize conducted by Winston Moore at an International Fly Fishing Expo. Winston has attained legendary status in the fly fishing community and is one of our sport’s great gentlemen. He was renowned for the meticulous records he kept of all his fishing exploits. When he got into salt water flats fly fishing, his passion was Belize where he began studying taking bonefish, moved on to tarpon, and ended up spending his time pursuing permit (one of a very few anglers to have released over 100 permit). He pioneered using a mothership to access Belize’s great permit flats inside its barrier reef – many years before our family took our first Belize mothership trip in 1987. We’re proud to have Winston as a regular reader and often contributor to our newsletter - latest was the June ’13 edition when Winston commented on a Golden Trout article. He had spent his summers for seven years as a young man working in the Sierras for an outfitter in spectacular Golden Trout country and literally released 1,000’s of native goldens. Golden Trout to permit – that covers an immense spread of fly fishing experiences! At right, Winston with a Belize tarpon from about 40 years ago.



As he gets ready to turn 90 this year, he doesn’t have the mobility to spend time on the water as he used to. However, his mind is ever-sharp! Recently, in response to a message I sent informing him (bragging??) about my recently taking all three species of permit, he sent me some pearls of wisdom.....some of which make up this month’s memorable quote: “AS ONE AGES, SEVERAL EYE OPENING FACETS OF LIFE BECOME MORE AND MORE APPARENT.....MY MANTRA TO ALL OF MY FRIENDS FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS IS TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, STAY HEALTHY AND, TAKE IT FROM AN OLD MAN, DO IT NOW WHILE YOU CAN. DON'T WAIT.”

(Note: Winston’s biography has been completed by Mickey Myhre and will be published in the next few months)

MARCH MEMORY PHOTOS – A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



Something new.....this month’s “Memory Photos” are from a personal experience during our recent New Zealand trip. This episode would make “my top three” personal NZ experiences and maybe my most interesting “last cast” story ever. It was our last day in NZ before heading to Australia and the North West Cape/Ningaloo Reef area. We made a joint decision with our guide to take a chance and do some exploring via helicopter on a stream that last year was completely blown out during a severe storm and, since then, no one had fished the upper stretches of the water. There were no promises on this day except we’d experience a beautiful small river environment (aerial shot, below left) and easy wading (which my replacement knees needed). I was sharing the day with our guide and John

Landis. John had been a lucky charm – we had fished together for two other days on this trip (his first NZ trip) and released 32 browns that weighed a total of over 120 pounds and averaged about 4 pounds each.....except for a few, all of them were stalked with a “sight cast” presentation. However, as this day wore on, it appeared as if we had exhausted our good luck and the fishing gods were going to get even today with the Landis/Muelrath team.

It was another brilliant sunny day in the high 80’s. Not many sighted fish – the river obviously had not fully recovered yet. Fished to only nine mostly non-responsive fish until the last pool before the copter was due to pick us up. That last pool was long (50-60 yards) with some deep sections near the rocky cliff and most of the water in afternoon shadows making seeing fish difficult (above is the pool with the copter at the bottom of it and John in the center of



the photo ready to climb aboard). About half way up the pool, we saw a large fish.....he was working a beat in the pool and caused us to “hit the ground” when he surprisingly turned downstream and came within a dozen feet of where we were. When he turned and moved back upstream, we got off our bellies and cast a Cicata in front of him. He turned on the fly, approached and put his nose just beneath it, and floated downstream with the fly for about ten feet before turning off and not eating. Big fish – hearts in our mouths!!! He then moved to the far side of the pool where glare prevented us seeing him.

We waited ten minutes for him to reappear – nothing. Our guide reminded me we had about 20 minutes before the copter was due to pick us up so we took some blind casts into the glare, holding our breath that we wouldn't spook him. Nothing.....so we began moving up the pool. A large fish was spotted



to the right, in the quiet water near where the riffles poured into the pool, and it was feeding.....not sure whether it was the same fish or a mate of his – looked large, about the same size? Floated a nymph to him – he approached the fly and gave it a good look, but refused.....and then swam off into the glare on the far side. I was reminded – just a few minutes until copter pick up so we took some blind shots into the head of the pool. Suddenly, the guide said as he pointed, “I've got him – in that deep seam directly across from us.” One cast above him.....luckily, it made a good drift, the fish moved up slightly and ate.....at the same time, we heard the sound of the copter's engine echoing up the river canyon. “Fish on” and we could tell it was a good one! The fishing gods smiled on me and we got him to the net while the copter pilot, who had landed and walked up the bank, helped root us on.....the scale said eight and a half pounds. Just

incredible timing after twice having this fish refuse our fly and then disappear – last cast for this year's New Zealand trip and one that even my fading memory cells will remember.

PHOTO CREDITS: 10# brown – Anne and Andy Baxter; first permit - Rod Squires, Jeff Wellington, and Denny Mohan; pink hat fish – Mickey Myhre.

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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