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We are in the seventh 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 destinations. 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.

**WINTER TRIP REPORTS – SOUTHERN HEMISHERE AND BELIZE**

When our winter skies are gray and cold, the top destinations for fly fishing getaways include Patagonia (Chile and Argentina), New Zealand, Brazil (the Amazon), and tropical destinations like Belize. While the southern hemisphere is experiencing summer conditions during our winter, the tropics can have their own weather issues with the occasional cold front reaching places like the Bahamas, Mexican Yucatan, and Belize. However, whatever "winter weather conditions" exist in places like Belize, it's a lot more comfortable than most of the USA, especially this year. Here are some recent reports from these great winter time options.

**FROM PATAGONIA:** While at a lodge in the Alps of the South Island of New Zealand in 2005, we met a couple named Vicki and Jim Nix. During dinner together, Vicki made a statement that should warm the heart of every married, passionate fly fisher. "Jim and I are getting married tomorrow evening after he gets in from fishing. And, if he gets back late, we'll just have the ceremony the next morning." And added later, "the fishing is driving the schedule, not the ceremony." This statement was made famous (in a very small world) when we deemed it of enough fly fishing significance to publish in our newsletter that year.



That is the very same Vicki (who is a research botanist associated with the Smithsonian Institute) in the red coat at right preparing to do some botanical research in the Andes of Chile. She doesn't fish, but they often find destinations that allow for her to carry on her research while Jim carries on his fly fishing pursuit in the same area. In January, Argentinean and Chilean Patagonia provided an area that satisfied both objectives. From the naturalist side of things, an expert on condors was arranged for a day of observing these majestic birds. Jim (with 26 inches at left) fished on both the Argentine and Chilean side of the Andes. While he did enjoy some excellent angling on the Argentine side, the real highlight was our

favorite Chilean lodge. Jim's report included these thoughts on that experience....."Vicki and I both really enjoyed our Andes lodge experience at PBC. Vicki and her guide went out every day exploring. The best fishing, lodge, guides, host, food and drink were at this lodge. I have already rebooked for next year and am bringing three of my friends with me. Can't say enough good things about PBC and our Chilean experience."

Sherri and Dave Wood are globe hopping adventurers who also like to work in some fly fishing whenever possible. On a recent trip to Antarctica, they worked in a week in Argentinean Patagonia. I love the way Sherri (with nice brown at right) expresses the "coming down" from a great fly fishing adventure..... " We've been home for almost two weeks and it's AWFUL -- no days spent along side a river with time to contemplate the meaning of life, no lessons on wildlife from a great guide who knows so much, no meals presented at mid-night..... we both had an absolutely wonderful time on the Collon Cura





and the Trafal -- two beautiful rivers with different temperaments. And we are telling the story about being 'there' when the new record fish was caught at Arroyo Verde (note: Sherri is referencing the new estancia record 34.5 inch brown in photo at left)."

Additional note: we did have a complaint about the accommodations at Arroyo Verde from another reliable client – if you'd like to know more, just ask.

**FROM THE AMAZON:** Regarding the Agua Boa Amazon Lodge, reports continue to be outstanding as water conditions are the lowest in years. Our January newsletter carried the report on our late January trip when our group took over 100 peacock bass that weighed over 10 pounds. Now we have a report from the group that was there the week after us that repeated that feat – taking over 100 ten-plus pound fish.



**FAMILY TRIPS – NEW ZEALAND AND BELIZE** The year end holidays provided a window of opportunity for the Walsh family to visit New Zealand and Australia. The New Zealand portion, where they spent most of the time, was built around fly fishing for Father Michael and the family CEO, Christie, with special supervised activities and adventures built in for Michael (13), Austin (12), and Brianna (11). Some of the fishing time was devoted to selected streams that allowed for easier success for the kids while Mom and Dad focused on the traditional New Zealand trophy waters. The highlight was the fabulous "dream fish" that Christie took – the 12 pound brown pictured at left. Dad termed it the "trip of a lifetime." (more details on this itinerary next month)



The Tymstra family (Jeanne, Peter, and teenage sons Matt and Eric) used the holidays to visit Belize, both the Turneffe Island atoll and an inland eco-tour resort. This would be Matt and Eric's first experience at fly fishing the salt water flats. Comments from Jeanne regarding the overall experience....."Just want to let you know we had a fabulous trip. We did encounter some wind and rain, but all three guys caught quite a few and the snorkeling on the reef was beautiful. 1<sup>st</sup> day – Matt and Eric took over 15 bonefish. And our inland resort, Chan Chich, was absolutely stunning. A remote, first class, jungle resort in an undeveloped area with wildlife. Good spot to relax."

## EVOLUTION OF A SALT WATER FLATS FLY FISHERMAN



In the fall of 2007, Taylor Collins was first introduced to the excitement of fishing the salt water flats with a fly rod. He accompanied a friend who was a long time veteran of fishing the flats of Belize using a mothership as the base of operations. His results were spotty as he was overmatched by the challenges involved. On that trip, he was captivated by the allure of sight casting on the flats and, upon returning home, began to develop his casting skills. Our May, 2008, newsletter had this report on his next Belize mothership trip accompanied by a few photos.....*Taylor had a day with 8 bonefish released, jumped his first tarpon on a fly, got his first barracuda on the fly, and had shots at tailing permit (the most*

*difficult of all species to take on a fly). Taylor's permit account is familiar to most of us who've casted to tailing permit, especially first encounters – "we did see tailing permit, although I was so damn nervous that I never really did have them worried."*



Fast forward to this past November.....Taylor was on the maiden trip of the new Belize mothership option, the *Rising Tide*, during Thanksgiving week and took his second permit (photo above left). Two weeks ago, during the first 15 minutes of his second *Rising Tide* trip, he took his third permit (photo right with Captain Dean Myers). He was accompanied on the most recent trip by some friends who were "fly rod hunting" on the salt water flats for the first time. The group took a lot of bones (including some "firsts"), jacks, baby tarpon, and snook.....in addition to that sacred permit of Taylor's. Additionally, Taylor had a tarpon in the 80 to 100 class hooked up solid before his fly line broke at the backing connection. (left - the *Rising Tide* near Belize City with flats boat in tow)



Regarding Taylor's experiences fishing Belize from a mothership, and more recently, the *Rising Tide*, he comments: "Fishing from the mothership in Belize has been crucial to me honing my fly fishing skills because of the extra time it allows one to be on the water and being able to migrate to areas

holding different species. The *Rising Tide* has taken the wonderful benefits of fishing from a mothership base and provides a four star experience, both on the water and on the boat. It's also nice to know that the owners of the boat have been long term customers of the Belize trip and understand what the client expects and needs."

## SURVEY OF AVAILABILITY – WORLD CLASS FLY FISHING ADVENTURES

We've done a quick survey of availability at a few of the world class fly fishing adventures we're very familiar with to determine if our economic climate has caused space to be available at this late date at destinations that are normally fully booked long before now for their prime times. Beginning with the very near term (next 45 to 90 days) for those who may have the flexibility to travel on short notice, here is what we found:

**Amazon – Agua Boa:** perfect water conditions continue. Space for at least two rods each of these weeks: 2/27 – 3/6, 3/13 – 20, 3/20 – 27; 4/3 – 10.

**Belize motherships:** with most of the attention being focused on the new option (*Rising Tide*), the refurbished *Meca* presents its usual comfortable and welcoming environment with at least two weeks open in each month. The *Rising Tide* has only 5/14 – 21 and 6/21 – 28 (both good tarpon dates) open prior to the end of July – after August 1, lots of flexibility.

**Patagonia:** In Argentina, openings exist at the top estancias and lodges sporadically throughout March. Patagonia Base Camp Lodge, our favorite Chilean Andes Lodge, has openings in these March weeks – 12 to 19 and 19 to 26.

**New Zealand:** All NZ itineraries are customized to meet client objectives. Like Patagonia, if you have flexibility in your travel schedule, almost any itinerary can still be arranged in March and early April.

**Bahamas – Flamingo Cay:** This is the most unique lodge in the Bahama's – truly a special spot (ask for report if you want to know why). However, very hard to find space. Most of their space is taken by repeat groups of six or eight; however, in reviewing their calendar for the next few months, there is occasional space available for two anglers at a time. If your calendar is flexible, it can work.....very high end.

**Ascension Bay's finest – Casa Blanca:** 3/13 – 20 (2 rods); 4/10 – 17 (8 rods); 4/17 – 24 (2); May and June – space for at least two rods each week.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO THIS SUMMER:

**Fernie, BC:** most weeks during the prime Bull Trout time still have space. Will fish well for native Cutthroat beginning around July 10.

**Top Private Waters In The West:** Pecos River Ranch and Three Forks Ranch each have times that are full, but sufficient space remains to find room.

**Prime "Silvers on the Surface" weeks at Goodnews/Alaska:** 8/11 – 18 and 18 – 25 both have some space.

**Top time at Bristol Bay Lodge/Alaska:** full 8/21 – 9/4, but space 8/14 – 21, 8/23 – 30, and 9/4 – 11.

**Minipi River, Labrador:** only prime time space still open at our favorite of their three lodges is for two rods on 7/16 – 23. Their other two lodges both have prime time available for some rods each week.

## FEBRUARY MEMORY PHOTO

There have been many 15 to 20+ pound peacock bass taken recently on a fly from the waters of the Agua Boa River watershed in the Amazon; however, Markus Furrer's 19 pounder was "more special" than most. Not only did it tie with two others (Bob Elliot and Buzz Warner) for top fish of the week at the lodge, his was taken sight casting with a homemade popper. Most of the larger peacocks are more susceptible to large streamers fished subsurface, but Markus' big fish fell to a popper whose body was made from the rubber sole of a sandal!



**PHOTO CREDITS:** (top to bottom) banner photo – Nancy Siegler; Vicki and Jim w/fish – Jim Nix; Sherri with brown – Dave Wood; peacock bass – John Landis; Christie Walsh with brown – Michael Walsh; permit – Taylor Collins; Rising Tide – Michael Berard;

**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  
[www.flyfishingadventures.org](http://www.flyfishingadventures.org)**

**888-347-4896  
[flyfish@napanet.net](mailto:flyfish@napanet.net)**

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