

**Introduction:** John Part has made the trek from the UK to New Zealand twice a year, during the months of October and April, for 14 years. He has released more than 40 brown trout that weighed in excess of ten pounds. These are his thoughts on why he chooses those months to fish New Zealand and how to make the fishing time in New Zealand the most productive.

### **What's so special about New Zealand?**

In a sentence, it's the hunter in me. The rivers are clear; the fishing is all upstream and mainly to sighted fish; the brown trout are difficult – most of them have a PhD in flies; the country is beautiful; the people are good natured and 'can do'; the pioneer spirit lives. What's not to like? Okay, the distance from the UK perhaps.

Brown trout in the top part of the South Island are generally considered a tougher proposition than the mainly rainbow trout, or mixed brown and rainbow trout rivers elsewhere. I have come to New Zealand trout fishing after years of lake fishing in England, many salmon in Russia's Kola Peninsula, and many large sea run browns in Tierra del Fuego, and even taimen in Mongolia. All exciting; but turning upstream and fishing for large sighted fish (average over 4lbs) in beautiful clear rivers gives me the ultimate in sport. For me, the wild brown New Zealand trout is the king of fish demanding great respect. One day he may give up relatively easily and you think you can fish. Next day and the day after, you learn a harder lesson.

### **Why October and April?**

Being a hunter by nature I want the best chance of finding taking fish. A stretch of brown trout river in new Zealand generally takes days to recover after it has been fished. Fishing pressure is much less at this time of year. It is easier to get on the stretch you want, and find fish feeding relatively confidently. This time of year has by and large been just as good for me as the more popular months of late December to early March. The weather is more chancey, but we have seldom failed to find a good fishable stretch or river, even after heavy rain.

Drawbacks? Not many. Days are shorter, but there is no midday lull. The weather is cooler but seldom unpleasant. It reminds me of Scotland in Spring. Dry fly action is still there if you want it. For me, it's not that important. In fact it's a relaxation from the more demanding nymph fishing. I do not count cicada or large Royal Wulff fishing as real dry fly fishing, and a lot of advertised dry fly fishing is like this – like hopper fishing in North and South America. But true dry fly action is possible for an hour or two more days than not.

### **Big fish**

Most important is your guide, and doing exactly as he tells you. I've fished with Scott Murray of Riverhaven Lodge every year for the past fourteen years. He has become a friend. Your chances of success are much more in your guide's hands than elsewhere. Spotting the fish is not easy. Knowing where and when to go is key. Moreover Scott has taken my fishing to another level. It's much easier to fool these difficult fish if you use a light line and a long leader. We use a #4 weight rod and sometimes a #3. The #6 stays in the pack unless the wind gets strong. I consider the #5 a bad

compromise, heavier than necessary in normal conditions, and not carrying enough 'grunt' for a strong wind.

Being able to cast a long leader (16 to 20 ft) with a 3mm+ tungsten beaded nymph into a breeze will get you a good chance at the fish. Being able to do this while wading hip deep is even better. Big fish are generally no harder to catch than smaller ones. There are just fewer of them, and few rivers hold them in any numbers. Scott has encouraged me not to become obsessed with big fish. This can become a sad condition. Better just to fish a fair proportion of your days on rivers that hold big fish, and take your chances as they come, one or two in a normal trip if you are lucky. More in a 'mouse year'[when beech trees flower overtime the mouse population explodes, and as food runs out the mice swim rivers to look for more. Then trout grow fat]. It's not rocket science.

But get a good guide and do exactly (and I stress, exactly) as he – it's usually he – says. And that's where the good agent is crucial – ensuring you get the best possible guide.

John Part