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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.

AUSTRALIA'S NORTH WEST CAPE AND THE NINGALOO REEF



There isn't much in the north west corner of Australia – a lot of desolate and dry outback, hoards of Kangaroos, several dangerous snakes.....and the spectacular waters of the Ningaloo Reef (left). Each year for the past dozen, we have made a visit to somewhere in the tropical area of the South Pacific after our annual trip to New Zealand. This year, that tropical stop was our first ever visit to Australia and was focused on the North West Cape and the Ningaloo Reef. In recent years, these waters have drawn visitors from all over the world to enjoy the rich marine life environment. Whale Sharks and Hump Back Whales make annual pilgrimages here to nurture their young and three varieties of the world's sea turtles (Green, Loggerhead, and Hawksbill) use these beaches for their nesting. The marine life is truly spectacular. My wife, Marte, is an avid snorkeler who has visited a collection of the best snorkeling environments on the globe and stated that these waters were as "good as it gets."

So, what about the flyfishing possibilities? With a marine environment as rich as this and miles of shallow waters, there was bound to be a productive saltwater flats fishery. Someone just needed to explore it and discover what was there and how to fish it. Today, there are three guides who claim to be "fly fishing guides" – of those three, one is truly an excellent flats flyfishing guide who has been fishing and exploring here for 8 years. There is also a very good offshore fishery for billfish (sails and marlin) outside the reef, but as readers of this newsletter know, there is not often a relationship between offshore guide skill and the skills possessed by an outstanding flats guide.



I had several good shots at Giant Trevally between 40 and 60 pounds, but only had one of the large ones eat my fly.....but did not get it to the skiff. Golden Trevally (right, above) are found here in both good numbers and world record size (20+ pounders) – I had some trouble holding onto a large one (coral kept getting in the way),

but did manage some 4 to 6 pounders and one fish over 10#. While bonefish did not come easily on the three days we spent time pursuing them, there were large bones available and I was able to release my personal record, a bone of 8# - previous best was 7# (left, above).



Permit were a highlight and provided numerous solid shots each day. The four permit I released included both species of Indo-Pacific permit, *Trachinotus Blochii* (at left above) and *Trachinotus Anak* (right, above). Those two species added to our common Caribbean permit gave me what is termed “the Permit Trifecta” – capturing all three species of this challenging angling demon, an extra thrill for me. Center above, a snorkeler checks out a Whale Shark.

The Ningaloo Reef and adjoining coastal flats are on the west side of the North West Cape. On the east side, is the Exmouth Gulf with an entirely different marine environment. Both sides hold lots of permit. If you’d like to see our full photo essay report with more details on both fisheries and including more info on the permit fishery, this link will take you there: [Ningaloo Reef, Australia, Photo Essay Report](#)

STALKING STILLWATER BROWNS IN NZ

We could clearly see the large brown cruising the shoreline, moving slowly toward us as he swam in and out of the round tufts of grass protruding from the waters glassy surface (right). He was obviously looking for his next meal. We were about 100 feet away, just hoping he would continue on his current path to bring him into casting range. This was our third day fishing Lake Brunner and I was over the “buck fever” stage that had negatively impacted my casting on the first day when I blew repeated opportunities at fish like this. I was now “seasoned” and knew what to expect. I had learned where I should place the fly to reduce the chance of spooking fish. And, the odds were reasonably good that this big fish would slowly approach, stick his nose just above the surface, and inhale my fly.



Almost every serious trout angler has heard of the exciting and challenging stalking experience of hunting trophy rainbows and browns in the crystal clear streams and rivers of New Zealand. What very few are familiar with is the special stillwater fishing at Lake Brunner on the South Island.....an equally exciting fly rod hunting challenge. What caused me to make the commitment this year to spend a lot of time examining Lake Brunner and its trophy browns was simply my unknown ability to spend two or three weeks walking and wading all over New Zealand as we usually do on our annual trip. Recovering from dual knee replacement, I was not sure how much of that walking and wading I could handle.



If there are giant browns of ten or more pounds in Brunner, we didn’t see them. The prevailing thought is that for there to be more fish of that size, it would be necessary to thin out the population of 3 to 6 pound fish. Of course, there is nothing wrong with the 3 to 6 pound fish, especially since there is a good number of them available. The most exciting aspect of this fishery is that you can make it an entirely sight casting opportunity. There were days that I only cast to specific fish that were visible. A few other days, I added blind casting at likely spots along the

shoreline and took a few more fish, but nothing tops watching a big brown approach a well cast offering, rise up, and take that fly off the surface.



A key to our success was using a quietly poled boat to examine the likely spots.....very similar to fishing from a poled skiff on the salt water flats. The shorelines offered a variety of fishing environments:

- Fallen, submerged logs
- Tufts of grass growing out of the water – very shallow....sometimes a tail or dorsal fin would break the surface
- Deep dropoffs from a mountain plunging into the lake
- River mouths flowing into the lake.....most of these could be waded (photo, left above).
- Shallow bays with gravel bottoms.
- Live drowned trees partially submerged.

In terms of numbers, the best day we had was 18 fish released. That day was shared with John Landis who stopped and fished a day at Brunner with me while moving from one location to his next stop on his first NZ itinerary. The worst day was one fish on my first day – as stated previously, that day was my “education day.” For a more detailed photo essay report on Lake Brunner, click this link: [Lake Brunner Photo Essay Report](#)

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

As we contemplated booking a 2015 trip to the relatively newly discovered “small mountain rivers” of Boliva to cast to large Golden Dorado, Jim Hine reminded me of his favorite quote, from Mark Twain: "Twenty years from now, you will more regret the things you didn't do than the ones you did." With Mr. Twain looking over our shoulders, we booked the trip!

FINAL RESULTS – RECORD PERMIT TRIP



In September of last year, Art Hinckley, Dennis Banks, and Don Wilkerson endured some unfavorable weather conditions on a Belize Rising Tide mothership trip and still released 16 permit, one short of the record for such a trip. This March, Art and Dennis were joined by Brad Jackson and they again boarded the Rising Tide as their floating lodge to explore the best permit flats on the globe, inside the barrier reef off central Belize.....and this time they shattered the record with an exceptional trip of fishing exclusively for permit. On this trip, Dennis (at left) took his 50th permit on the last day and set the pace with 11 fish released. Brad had 8 fish and Art just 5, one of his lowest totals ever in his 10+ years of doing this trip. Art is now at 96 total permit and will soon become a member of a very small and exclusive “fly fishing club” of guys who’ve taken over a 100 permit. That could

(should?) happen on the trip they have booked for August – unless I’ve jinxed him! When Art took his 50th permit, I committed to being there when he took #100 and so will be joining them this August.

From Art’s daily dairy comes this summation of the trip: “We had a great trip with mostly good weather which we haven’t had for the past several trips. We saw a lot of permit in some spots, but in the other areas we saw quite a bit less than we would normally expect to see, especially with the good weather. Also, we didn’t see as many big fish as usual. Dennis ended up with 11, Brad 7 and me 5. My 5 puts me at 96 which sets up the next trip with you nicely so you can be there to photo #100. Dennis was so hot he got to 50 with his last fish and Brad is now at 18 (obviously he hasn’t permit fished nearly as much as Dennis and me). 20 were caught on our normal crab flies and 3 were caught on the Avalon shrimp. We’re assuming that 23 permit (with 1 break off and 10 additional eats without hooking up) in one trip for 3 people must be one of the most productive permit trips ever anywhere.”

We're trying to count up the number of guys who've taken over 100 permit, the most difficult of all sport fish to capture on a fly, in their angling careers. We know Winston Moore, who first pioneered the Belize mothership "permit focused" trip, had 112, before age forced him to put his rod away. If you know of others, please let me know. Art's daily fishing diary is available as a word doc – if you'd like a copy, just ask.

APRIL MEMORY PHOTOS



Paul Souza and John Wilhelm recently visited the famous Rio Grande River in Tierra del Fuego (southern tip of Argentina) in pursuit of it's giant sea run brown trout. That's John at left and both of them at right with Paul holding his fish.

"We had a GREAT time. The lodge was 5 star and the fishing was 10 star. For the week I caught 4 fish that were 15 pounds or greater, and the fish of the week for me was a 21 pound brown. Wilhelm too had a great

week with 5 fish of 15 pounds or better and his Mr. Big weighed in at 20 pounds. As they say, I would rather be lucky than good. I have been lucky, with the 16# Alberta rainbow in October and now this."



With Paul's 16# Alberta spring creek rainbow and these giant browns being taken in one six month period, we're going to have to set up his own personal "memory photo column."

PHOTO CREDITS: Ningaloo underwater Whale Shark photo - Wesley Sutcliff; permit – Dennis Banks.

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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