

Well, Don, you outdid yourself with this place! The Estancia is a terrific place with a history at least three generations long. Originally 22,000 hectares (which I now know is 220 square kilometers or about 86 square miles, 9.27 by 9.27), it remains 5000 hectares as a brood ranch for cattle all through this region. The owner is the old time cattle baron type, going strong at like 78. He entertains the guests at cocktails with a half hour of medleys of show tunes and big band music, all 'jazzed' in his own fashion, wrapped up by great stuff from Porgy and Bess. The lounge is History museum with a gun collection which would stand up to that of the Metropolitan. Uniforms, old pictures including Rommel, Montgomery, Patton and Bradley with a collection of model fighting vehicles. Then there are all the articles about him and his role in regional politics and other civic events, a big time horseman who rides with his gauchos. Great fun! The dining room is classic Argentine, with a huge oven/fireplace/grill at one end. The food was four star yet not unduly heavy. Truly delicious, breakfast, lunch and dinner. And wonderful Argentine wines, a different one each night.

Our guide was six feet tall and incredibly built, he has taken up guiding and outfitting after fifteen years as a medical doctor. And you should see him cast these big flies! He can lay out 90 feet of line perfectly aimed into a two foot break in the foliage. He is an amazingly bright and charming guy.

So the accommodations and the personnel are superb. How about the fishing? As you know, Don, because you sent me to most of them, I have fished for most of the big freshwater fish in the world from Taimen to peacock bass, and none can compare to the Golden Dorado! The explosion when they hit is reminiscent of the move of a pike, but these fish hit on the surface like Taimen; you'd think someone threw a bowling ball into the water! I'd say that on an average they jump a foot or more into the air five times during the fight, many doing more than that. They aren't some 12 " rainbow; these fish run to forty pounds and more! I don't believe that there is a prettier fish, not even the peacock bass! They are shaped more like a trout than anything else, but with big scales. Teeth? Definitely to be avoided, wire leaders a must. In short, this is the hardest fighting, most aggressive fish I have ever seen, and it isn't even close.

The abundance of fish is absolutely alarming. They are THICK! But they aren't easy to catch although they definitely are catchable. But it takes accurate long casts. The most effective method is BIG streamers fished right on the surface or an inch or two below the water, always in sight. The water is clear so you see everything developing. If this were typical streamer fishing, I would have been on the plane to Patagonia two days earlier! They can be taken on dry fly patterns and lighter tackle as well. I caught one today on a leggy foam cricket, size eight, that was probably seven pounds. Poppers draw awesome strikes, but they were less than satisfactory for me. A typical day will see at least thirty strikes depending on how good you are casting, but 100 fish days are not uncommon. There are three other fish whose names escape me, but one in the Argentine Permit called a Pacu, a fish which lives up to it's reputation as a fighter.

The river itself is awesome: howler monkeys in the trees, toucans perched amongst thousands of noisy parakeets. The water is quite

clear, 84 degrees. The clarity contributes to the fishing experience for a dry fly guy like me: you see everything happening, the fish darting out from under whatever slamming your fly before you can take a breath. No lifting of rods here! You MUST strip-set. I instinctively set the hook today in a small Dorado and snapped my six weight Winston between farrells. Later in the day, I snapped my Sage 8 weight XP trying to lift a ten kilo Dorado (20+ #) out from under a bunch of logs.

Don, I suspect that you find my story surprising given that I have made it clear that if I never ever fished sub-surface again in my life, it would be too soon! I'm not sure I have ever caught a fish on a streamer in sixty years of fly fishing! But this was streamer fishing, no doubt. But because everything happens on the surface or within a few inches of the surface, you see everything. For my money, this was streamer fishing in name only; this was a dry fly fishing experience! And with ten to thirty pound fish!

Did I mention that these fish are aggressive? I am including a separate email a picture of a nine kilo Dorado than my fishing buddy Van Wood caught; as he was holding it for a picture, it turned its head and bit him on the chest (a link to that video is pasted in below)!! On one day, Van caught fifty fish, at least ten in excess of 3 kilos, and two or three in the 15 to 20 pound range.

Anyhow! I could go on and on, but the short story is that this is the ultimate in fishing experiences.

C.E. Pat Patterson  
Sent from my iPhone

Click on this link to see video of Golden Dorado:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOTJwPLveuY>