



## Stalking A Big Brown, New Zealand



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

### THE BEST COUPLES TRIP WITH WORLD CLASS FLY FISHING – THE “BUTT’S APPROACH”



Terry and Gary Butts are veterans of New Zealand and have refined their approach to fishing/touring the land of the Kiwis. Fishing is still the priority (that’s Gary at left with a nice brown taken not far from where he is fishing in the banner photo above – Terry at right). However, they take advantage of the many opportunities New Zealand offers to intersperse touring and relaxing days with their fishing days to make it a well rounded trip.

Gary keeps an excellent diary of their trips and sends us a complete report on their experiences.....very helpful feedback from our perspective. What follows are some excerpts on this years trip from that diary:

- Their first fishing stop was in Fiordland, after two nights of relaxing in Queenstown. First two days, they fished “big fish” rivers and the third day, a river known more for numbers. “.....the first day, landed 8, all browns, 5 to 6 1/2 lbs (weighed). The 2nd day, we landed 9 browns, 4-5 lbs, and one 6” rainbow! We probably hooked 15 fish but broke several off..... the last day, we landed 9 or 10 fish - mostly 17”-20” rainbows. A couple of 2-3 pounders and one 4-5 pounder.”



- Spent a few days in an area with a famous Albatross rookery and a unique castle. Then another 3 day fishing stop.....“we fished spring creeks that were in a spectacular river valley.....big valley, big country, and drop dead gorgeous waters. The first day.....we landed just one, a 4 lb rainbow. We landed four the 2nd day, the largest was a 5 lb rainbow. We lost a larger brown at the net. The last day, we fished another beautiful spring creek - picky fish but we landed 9 rainbows, 2 to 3 1/2 lbs.
- Next off to a “wine and dine country retreat” in the wine country for R & R. Then they finished the fishing portion of their trip with their last three days at their favorite lodge in the northwest part of the South Island.....“27 browns released in three days.....all casting to sighted fish. All the fish were between 3 and 5½ pounds, most in the 4-5# range.”
- Their trip finished with four nights at their favorite getaway spot,

renting a small, clifftop cottage with a stunning view.....dining, touring, hiking and sightseeing. This cottage is an architecturally designed jewel that encompasses all the modern conveniences and has a spa-pool set right on the cliff edge offering breathtaking views.

If you’d like more details about Terry and Gary’s itinerary (or other similar couples itineraries), just hit “reply” and inquire.

### FORTY BROWNS OVER 10 POUNDS RELEASED – THOUGHTS FROM JOHN PART

John Part, from the UK, has used trips to New Zealand in the months of October and April to catch and release more than forty brown trout that weighed over ten pounds in the last 14 years. There probably couldn’t be a better way to introduce John than the photos below. He wrote an excellent report which can be accessed in total below. Excerpts from that report:

- What’s so special about NZ: “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: the country is beautiful; the people are good natured and ‘can do’; the pioneer spirit lives. What’s not to like?”



- “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.”
- “.....turning upstream and fishing for large sighted fish (average over 4lbs) in beautiful clear rivers gives me the ultimate in sport.”
- Why October and April: “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 of river, even after heavy rain.”
- “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.”

If you’d like to see John’s full report, this link will take you there - [New Zealand Report - John Part](#)

### CALIFORNIA TROUT FLYFISHERS FIRST TIME IN NZ

During our recent three weeks in NZ, we were joined for the last nine days of our trip by two friends from California, Gary Neal and Mark Anderson. Both had fly fishing skills geared to fishing for small trout in California, but they were prepared to be challenged by the learning curve associated with taking and landing the large NZ trout. They passed the test, with some assistance from the excellent guides we fished with, and, between them, took several trophy browns over five pounds, topped by Mark’s seven pounder. Following are photos capturing some of the highlights of this trip.

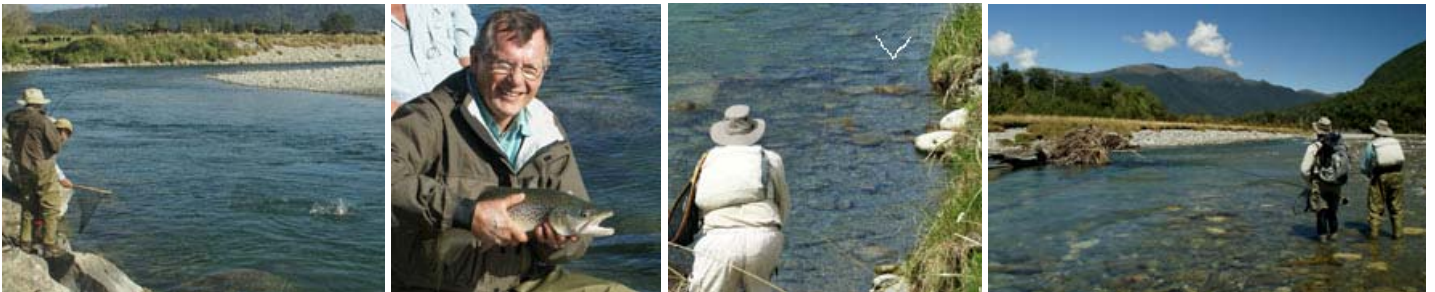


L to R: Brown taken on a #8 Stimulator; Nice fish to the net; Gary with a 5.5# brown; Mark learns that the photo can be as challenging as getting the eat.



Above, L to R: Mark takes, celebrates, and manages to hold onto a 6# brown.

Below: Small streams and spring creeks can hold surprises like the 6# fish with the size 16 Parachute Adams (orange post) in it's lip.



Above: Gary has nice fish on....and netted for photo. Typical stalk of a wary brown, this one unsuccessful.

Below: Our last day, we used a copter to access a remote stream. Lunch on the river. A full bodied 6# fish that finally ate after over a hour of rejections and presenting at least 15 different flies. The bruised nose came from wrapping itself in the leader on a spectacular leap after racing about 80 yards downstream.



Comments.....from Gary: "Our trip could not have been better, The opportunity to site cast to trophy size brown trout in crystal clear streams is hard to match anywhere. Our guides were top notch and extremely patient with our casting foibles. The New Zealand countryside is picturesque and lends a lot to the whole experience."

Mark: "To the question 'How was your trip?'.....my reply has been a trip-of-a-lifetime....and I mean it! What an experience. I can't remember a vacation/travel where I was involved in such intense physical & mental challenges and have it be so rewarding, all at the same time. I value the opportunity I had to get to know some Kiwi's. I learned so much and, most of all, have come to love New Zealand."

Below: my largest brown (left) came early in the trip, while Mark's 7# trophy happened on the last day.



Below: An exciting stalking episode came at the end of a day on a large spring creek. Left, Mark and guide observe a large brown as he works his “beat” – he had a feeding area staked out that began near the grassy moss with white flowers on the left of the photo and extended upstream, near the right bank, for about 20 yards. We watched him work his beat and occasionally rise to eat something while our blood pressure increased to an unsafe level. In the photo at right, while the fish was at the upper end of its beat, Mark moved into position to wait for him to return to a lower area where a presentation would be possible.



After the fish returned to the lower area and made his turn to begin moving upstream again (fish is visible in photo at left, below), Mark made his cast. Perfect – the fish rose and ate.....hook up. Then bad things happened as the fish used the grass to break off.....alas, the final photo didn't happen, but this California trout fly fisher will remember this episode!!!



### IT'S ALL IN THE GUIDE!

Your guide in New Zealand has a greater influence on the success of your trip than good guides at destinations anywhere else in the world. It starts with his selection of waters and his knowledge of how those waters fish in different conditions. Next is his ability to spot fish and his technical skills. Simply put, the “right” guide gets you on the best water available at the best possible time.....and in New Zealand, this is the most critical aspect in having an exciting day.

When fishing with what we like to term the “A” guides, we suggest a minimum, whenever possible, of three day fishing segments. This gives you a chance to build a relationship with the guide and also, you become more important to him than someone just passing through with a one day booking. Generally, a one day booking is not going to see that guides better choice of waters. Also, three days gives you a decent chance to experience good conditions and have one of those “special” NZ days that are unforgettable. If, by chance, you should hit things “wrong” the first two days, the “A” guide is going to go the extra mile to see your third day is something special.

At right, the guide selects the best fly to approach the sighted fish finning below them. Fly selection is often one of the critical decisions your guide makes with selectively feeding trout.



## THE ULTIMATE TROUT TRIANGLE



The photo at left above appeared in our March newsletter with an explanation of this incredible “only happen in NZ” scene. I’ve been asked about the conclusion to the scene – what happened after this photo was taken?

Here’s the whole story.....in the photo, two browns, both over six pounds, are seen. They show as dark straight lines (their shadows are all that is visible). Both are about half way down the photo – the one on the left is in front of the large rock and he’s about 1 inch in from the left edge. The fish on the right is almost directly to the right and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in from the edge. There was a third fish (unseen in the photo) – a monster brown who was at the bottom of the riffle in the top right corner. This third fish was only visible when he rose to eat a dry fly at the bottom of the riffle.

So.....what happened. The plan was to take out the fish on the lower right and attempt to keep him from spooking the one on the left, who may run upstream and spook out the giant at the bottom of the riffle. In the middle photo, we have the fish on the right hooked up and he is dangerously close to the fish on the left side of the lower part of the pool. In the effort to keep him away from the fish on the left side, I sort of led him to the back of the pool.....bad idea. He shot out the back end of the pool and began a downstream rush through a boulder strewn stretch of white water. A pursuit of about 80 yards, stumbling over rocks, ended with finally coaxing him into a gentle backwater for the net – that’s him on the right, above, 6.5# of healthy brown.

Next, we staggered back upstream to the pool. The guy on the left was still happy and feeding – apparently undisturbed by the activity. He was easy.....he ate and we rushed him to the net to avoid another downstream chase or him bolting upstream and spooking our giant in the riffle. Now.....for the big guy at the head of the pool, the third element of this triangle. At this point, I’m thinking if we get that double digit fish in the riffle, this will be one of my “forever” fly fishing memories, truly a dream episode. I make two casts to the big fish, both fairly bad, sloppy, inaccurate casts about 5 feet to his right (buck fever?). When the second cast hit the water, the big boy slid over to the rocky cliff on the left and dropped down into the undercut area and out of sight. So much for the dream.....but still a vivid memory.

## NZ SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

If you reside in the San Francisco Bay Area, we are available for slide presentations depicting the options of New Zealand. Presentations can be done for a family or small groups of friends wishing to learn more about a certain destination.....in this case New Zealand. Presentations can be made at private residences, offices, the Fish First Fly Shop in Albany or our fly fishing theatre in the Napa Valley. In addition to NZ, presentations are available on Belize, Ascension Bay, Alaska, Argentina (Patagonia, Golden Dorado, and Jurassic Lake), Chile, Minipi River in Labrador, Seychelles, Africa, Fernie BC, etc.

## A GREAT NZ EDUCATION

Recently, I read an excellent book on the NZ trout fishery. It does provide an outstanding education on this, the most special of trout fisheries. The



title is *Images of Silver, A Guide To Back Country Fishing*. It is written by Les Hill and Graeme Marshall and is available on Amazon.

**PHOTO CREDITS:** Banner photo and first article – Terry and Gary Butts; John Part.

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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