



Trophy Brookie Stalk
Minipi River



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We are in the fifteenth year of publishing our monthly newsletter with updates on the 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.

CUBA – A COUPLES FLY FISHING REPORT

“We are a married fly fishing couple, experienced with fly fishing travel, both about 50. Our fishing days in Cayo Largo were June 24-29. With travel days and some extra time in Havana, our total trip was June 22 to July 3.” So begins a report on Elizabeth and Tom Hart's trip to Cayo Largo in Cuba.

Their primary objective was bonefish (left with Elizabeth), permit (l-c with Tom), and tarpon (right with Elizabeth). Tom had two Grand Slams (bonefish, permit, and tarpon in one day) for the week and overall, the “fishing gods” smiled on their trip with mostly good weather and eager fish. Tom details their results with each species as well as the equipment they used in a very comprehensive report – link below.



Photos below: a large barracuda airborne after eating a fly rod popper. Elizabeth, on the casting platform of their poled skiff, with a fish on. Cayo Largo is a globe-hopper's resort island just south of the main island of Cuba. During their stay at Cayo Largo, their lodging was supplied by an all-inclusive resort just minutes from the fishing docks where they met their guide daily. Below: r-c is the lobby of the resort. At right, Elizabeth takes in the ocean view from one of the multiple restaurants at the resort.



A note on timing: The Harts trip took place in late June. Our personal experience, throughout many years, has been that tropical destinations like Cuba, Belize, and Ascension Bay can fish very well in June, July, and August. Some tropical destinations will have larger populations of biting bugs during the summer (and this forces some land based lodges to close), but this is not true in all situations. Weather is often settled, no worry about cold fronts, and usually there are fewer anglers than the more accepted springtime.

Equipment: Elizabeth and Tom are very experienced salt water fly rod anglers and that is reflected in the rods and reels they brought with them. They were equipped to cast to all the different salt water species that can be available. In fact, even if you had no interest in fishing Cuba, their report provides a great education on how to prepare to take maximum advantage of any multi-species destination such as Belize or Cuba. Newcomers to the salt water flats usually will only carry one or two rods; that is the way to begin. The collection described in the Hart Report would be the perfect equipment selection that can evolve after years of experience on the flats.

This link is to a comprehensive report on the Hart's trip: [Cuba - The Hart Trip Report](#)

FLIGHTS TO CUBA

Most Cuba anglers like to incorporate a few days in Havana on their first fishing adventure. The fishing programs in Cuba generally require an overnight coming and going in Havana. However, after you've done the "Havana thing" once, anglers usually would like to get direct to their fishing destination without the required overnights in Havana. We now have a private airline service out of Florida that provides non-stop service from the USA direct to Cayo Largo. The base price is under \$5,000 for a party of six. The price is the same whether there are 2 or 6 in the party so the best value is obtained by traveling as a small group.

TOP TEN FLY FISHING EXPERIENCES – 50+ POUNDS OF BROOK TROUT

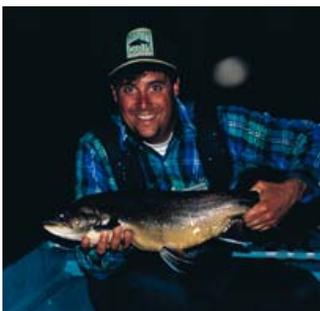
(I've been fortunate to have experienced so many memorable thrills in pursuit of my fly fishing passion, either fly fishing events by a fishing partner or personally. Over the next several newsletters, when space allows, I will attempt to relay what I consider to be the Top Ten.)

The Minipi River in Labrador – a true wilderness adventure where brook trout are measured in pounds, not inches. Son Scott and I have made eight trips to fish for the trophy brook trout of the Minipi over a period of 15 years. During that time, we had several days when we released more than 50 pounds of brook trout in one day. However, the first time it happened will always remain as one of our most memorable experiences.



Photos above: L and R – the hatches can be intense and are definitely part of the Minipi experience; male brookies in spawning dress have brilliant markings and colors.

It was our first trip to the Minipi and our week was almost over. During the week, we had learned how to stalk these cruising brutes as they sipped green drakes from the surface (we had hit the massive green drake hatch perfectly). It was an exciting "sight fishing experience" and it took some practice to anticipate the rise and place the fly in the right place. On this special day, Scott was fishing alone as I spent the day with another fishing partner. He and his guide had decided to concentrate during the day on some inlets and outlets which involved a portage and 20 minute walk across the Caribou Moss (a tundra like grass). They took four brookies – a 4.5, 3.5, 7.75, and 7.25 pounders. By dinner, he had a total of 23# for the day (on the Minipi, all fish are weighed and recorded, including where caught and the fly used).



When the drakes are popping, the long evenings are truly spectacular. In this far northern latitude, we could fish until about 11pm so the evening fish was a 3-4 hour

event. That evening, Scott took six more fish – 5.5, 3.5, 6.25, 4, 4.5, and the largest, a female 8.25 (photo at left). His total for the day was ten fish for a total weight of 55#.....truly a day neither of us will ever forget!

RULES FOR “UGLY FISHING”

Often, I hear something like, “.....but I don’t want to blind cast with a sink-tip line.” Yes, blind casting with a sink-tip line could come under the category of “ugly fishing.” It certainly is not as “pretty” or desirable as sight casting to a giant brook trout sipping drakes from the surface (see Top Ten article) or stalking and casting to tailing bonefish or permit. Stalking and sight fishing offer a visual thrill. You get to share in the entire experience of watching the fish react and, hopefully, inhale your offering. Agreed, it is worth waiting longer periods of time to search out those visual experiences. To find them, it usually takes far more time and patience. However, there are times and situations where blind casting a sinking line is worthwhile and should be considered.



The most obvious time is when the chances for a very large fish are most likely if you blind cast a sink-tip line. Situations like fishing for large stripers in the Delta in Northern California or trophy Golden Dorado in South America require getting down deep with a baitfish imitation.....these fish are seldom taken from the surface and it’s worthwhile to go through the effort because the reward is worth it. For the last 25 years, we have found blind casting for large tarpon in a few select channels in Belize very productive, if only during a short period at dawn and dusk. In



Belize, we generally are fishing using a mothership as our floating lodge. The fishing hours are long, allowing us to be on the water at daybreak and, again, as dark approaches. These sessions in Belize have produced a jumped tarpon between 40 and 120# over half the time during those years.....and the sessions last only for an hour. At these times other forms of fishing are generally not productive due to lack of light. To invest an hour in blind casting a sink-tip line with the reasonable potential of jumping a large tarpon certainly is worth the effort of “ugly fishing.”

On a recent family vacation in Belize, our grandkids blind fished these channels every evening and one morning. During every session, except one, at least one tarpon of 50+ pounds was jumped.....with the expected dramatic leaps in front of a setting tropical sun.....an exhilarating way to finish a day!



I find the #1 rule for finding it acceptable to blind cast a sinking line is simple: Is the potential reward special enough and is the best way to capture that reward getting subsurface with a sinking or sink-tip line?

WHAT WE DO AT FLY FISHING ADVENTURES

This is a new link with a description of who we are and what we do.....also, listing the destinations around the world that we can provide reliable information regarding the experience and how to prepare to visit:

[Fly Fishing Adventures - About What We Do](#)

AUGUST MEMORY PHOTOS – NOVICES IN THE SALT



The location for John Fildes (left) first salt water adventure was the variety fishery available at Casa Blanca on the Mexican Yucatan. Casa Blanca offers the newcomer to the salt flats good numbers of bonefish to develop sight-fishing skills, fishing from a poled skiff or wading. Plus, opportunities are usually available to cast to baby tarpon, snook, permit, and barracuda. John’s comments on his first salt water learning experiences: “.....it took a solid week of work to get my casting, fishing, and skiff etiquette worked out. Weather was good, windy 2 days with some rain. The bonefish were great, Tarpon tight mouthed and not biting for anyone. Permit elusive and I never hooked one. I had some great shots at them. Barracuda were outstanding. My room, the food and the service were outstanding. It is true that this trip raised the bar for all of my fly fishing. And, I had a blast! All in all, it was an excellent trip.”

Josh Luft-Glidden, despite being new to salt water fly fishing, committed to a dedicated permit trip in Belize. He used the mothership Rising Tide as his base of operations. The permit – the most challenging fly rod target in the realm of fly fishing.....sort of like beginning to climb a ladder on the top rung.....a very difficult place to begin as a salt water angler. He knew, going into the trip, that success would be measured in taking and releasing his first permit. At dinner, after two days of permit fishing, he frankly admitted to feeling a little overmatched stalking permit with so little experience as a salt water flats angler. On his third morning, he found a way to take this beautiful 12# permit from a small school of fish with a sight cast in very shallow water. The last three days, Josh had several more shots at tailing permit. At the conclusion of the trip, he stated that he felt confident he could see the fish and make the needed presentation.....a massive increase in confidence as a fly fisher in just 7 days. Congrats to Josh on bucking the odds and finding a way to succeed at fly fishing's greatest challenge!



PHOTO CREDITS: banner – Scott Muelrath; Cuba – Elizabeth and Tom Hart; anchored Belize mothership after dark – Valentine Atkinson.

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,
Don Muelrath
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