

NEWSLETTER #37 - JUNE 2005

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Leland Fly Fishing Travel Newsletter - June, 2005

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This is the thirty-seventh edition of our monthly newsletter with updates on great fly fishing venues and insights for our traveling fly fishers. We want to help you match the right location with your fly fishing goals and objectives and properly prepare you to fully enjoy the experience. We've been to most locations and pride ourselves on our ability to research new sites. One of our services is to compare and contrast different lodges/outfitters. 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.

THE HUNTER HUMBLD

The ultimate hunting experience with a fly rod may be permit fishing, and the shallow flats of Belize provide the ultimate hunting grounds. First morning of our recent trip to Belize...we were searching for fish on our favorite permit flat. My anticipation level was high as I'd been looking forward to six full days of permit fishing for several months. Not long after we began poling, we spotted the perfect permit set up. About 120 feet away, a school of 6-7 fish were moving slowly and feeding aggressively. Their tails were often clear of the water as they stalked and ate. And what tails!! This was a school of fish in the 20+ pound range. Deliberately, they kept coming, two or three of the tails constantly waving in the air. Happy, contented fish having their morning meal as they rooted in the bottom, chasing anything that moved. A permit fisherman dreams of this scene and only a few times in my permit career have I seen approaching fish look THIS GOOD and those two episodes resulted in hook-ups. They kept coming, drawn it seemed by my waiting crab fly – all we need to do is get ready and wait for them to get into range. 80 feet and still moving, slowly, directly toward us. No one could mess up this opportunity – this was almost too good to be true! I begin my cast, the line is in the air and I have to tell myself to keep breathing. Then an ugly sound – THHHWAP – and a sharp pain in my arse. I'm a lefty and there was a light wind blowing from our left – in my excitement, I hadn't calculated the effect that wind was going to have on a long line in the air. Quickly, we react and try to pull the fly free, keeping one eye on the approaching fish. It's in deep, but finally pulls free from the flesh.....only to get stuck in the fabric. Fish only 30 feet away.....can't free the fly....pull hard and rip it out. Fish 15 feet away....finally see the boat and explode, sending water spraying in their rush to get away from the clumsy angler pursuing them. How do I deal with this? Today, I can reflect on it with a smile; however, at the time, I was angry and, worst of all, felt very inadequate. It was such a hollow feeling, plus there is a small hole in the rear of my favorite tropical fishing pants...I couldn't bring myself to explain what happened to Marte, my wife, until the next day. I needed recovery time.

This unfortunate beginning does have a happy ending, with some very interesting twists. If you have interest in permit fishing, see below.

FOR PERMIT ANGLERS ONLY

I recognize that permit fishing attracts a rather small, but passionate group of fly fishers. With that in mind, I didn't use newsletter space to print the report on the rest of my permit trip. However, what resulted was one of my most

amazing angling experiences and it has to do with schools of spawning permit. If you'd like to see the entire report, hit "reply" and let me know. The detailed report is in a word document and I'll forward it to you.

LAST MINUTE TRIP PLANNING FOR THIS SUMMER

We've received several calls in the last two weeks from people looking for last minute space for this summer for family trips and/or father/son/daughter fly fishing adventures. Many of the top western lodges are full for all or most of the summer, but we have been able to find space in most cases. Flexibility of travel time helps since we're already into the summer time. There are many great outdoor adventures in the Western US and one of the things we do well is find the right adventure to meet your objectives.

Outside the lower 48, most of Alaska's top lodges are full also, but small windows of availability exist. We are holding prime time space for early September at one of Alaskas finest and have room for 6 more rods.

In British Columbia, Moose Lake Lodge (and it's sister lodge on the lower Dean River) has a very interesting fly out package in late August and early September for silver salmon in their coastal rivers. There are a few other world class lodges on the BC coastline that provide a variety of angling experiences, some of them "top drawer."

The same situation exists in the tropics. Salt water flats destinations such as Christmas Island, Ascension Bay, and the Belize motherships do have some weeks still open, although space is very limited.

If you've just had some time open up for a fly fishing adventure for this summer, give us a call and let us know what your interests are. We usually can find something to get you excited.

'06 PLANNING FOR THE SPECIAL DESTINATIONS

Now is the time to get on the "wait list" if you have any interest in some of the special destinations where we hold prime time space. These are destinations that are sold out every year and most of the same clients will rebook, but there's always some spots that come open. Some of those are:

Dean River: finest summer steelhead run on the globe. We have space for two of the prime weeks.

Minipi River: Giant brook trout in Labrador – a great wilderness adventure

Babine River: top early October week at the Babine Steelhead Lodge.

New Zealand: Most prime time spots are full with the top lodges and guides for '06, but a few spots remain. We're holding space for four more rods at Poronui Ranch in March as well as five rods at Lake Rotoroa Lodge in February, two of NZ's finest operations.

Patagonia: Some prime space still remains at the top Andes lodges for late January, February and March.

Belize Mothership Trips: Will soon know which weeks are open for '06 after re-bookings for this years clients are complete. At that time, we go to the "wait list" and open up space for "first timers."

Top Western Fly Fishing Lodges: There are two very special, high end, Rocky Mountain lodges with miles of private water. Most of their top weeks sell out 12 months in advance.

SPRING STEELHEAD ON THE SKEENA SYSTEM

In the last few newsletters, we posted some information about spring steelheading on the Skeena system in BC. It was noted that we were looking to acquire some space during the best time for trophy steelhead during the spring period. The response has been positive and we have secured the prime week of March 25 – 31. The price is \$2,595. We have space remaining for 4 rods. If you want more detail, hit "reply."

TRIP REPORTS

From a father-son fly fishing trip at Three Rivers Ranch in Idaho:

"We had a fantastic time. Great guides, good accommodations and very personalized attention. Generally, fishing was good and we were able to fish dry flys most days."

Alex and Guy Cecala

From a “first-time” salt water flats angler on a mothership trip in Belize:

“Trip was awesome. Can’t say enough good things about the guides and cook. Noel guided me to my first bonefish, tarpon, barracuda, and snook on a fly.....I can’t wait to go back.”

Garrett McKnight

QUIPS AND QUOTES: FROM SALTWATER FLY FISHING SCHOOL IN BELIZE

I was joined by Bob Noyes, Rich Hosley, Nibs White, Jack Fritschi, and Gary Shontz for our second salt water fly fishing “school” in Belize. A great group of guys and we had a wonderful trip together highlighted by the first day when everyone caught their first bonefish, plus we got a few barracuda on a fly and had four tarpon hookups with two break-offs and one 55 pounder landed. Fishing with newcomers to the salt always provides some interesting quips and this years trip supplies one of the most understated questions ever asked on a salt water flat.

While fishing with Bob Noyes on a tarpon flat, Bob asked this “soon to be famous” question. He had taken a bonefish and cuda on a fly his first day. Also, he had a tarpon eat his fly and quickly threw the hook, but he’d never seen a tarpon in the water before and, therefore, didn’t know how they appeared underwater. We were on a tarpon flat with a varied bottom – dark grass and white sand. Tarpon on the dark grass bottom weren’t visible because of their dark backs, but if they moved onto the white sand portion of the flat, they could be seen from great distances. Bob was on the casting platform and I was sitting in the middle of the boat. I hear Bob very casually ask, “What are these?” I looked over the side of the boat to see three tarpon, about 60 pounds each, slowly approaching the boat, about 20 feet away.

Of course, by the time we decided we should be throwing the fly to them, they had seen the boat and were gone.

“What are these?” – the quote of the month, maybe the year??

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

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