

# The ANGLING REPORT

*serving the angler who travels*



ALASKA - KANEKTOK RIVER (TAR|AUG.2018):FRED SCHMITZ

## DATELINE: BELIZE & MEXICO

### Subscriber Report A Head-to-Head Report on Permit



*Editor Note: Longtime professional fly fisherman Richard Hart sends*

*us this report comparing options for fly-fishing the flats for slam during season. His Angling Report testimonies have come from various locations across the globe. Richard has attained more than 110 IGFA world records in a four-year period, all on the fly. He has various length records and tippet-class records, including several that are the largest of a species caught on fly tackle. He ranked number one for those three years with the most freshwater fly records. He had this to say about his experience south of the border:*

**T**he annual need for fishing the flats plus a couple of empty weeks on the calendar added up to my taking advantage of a couple of last-minute deals that I came across. The first was

Turneffe Flats (<http://www.tflats.com/>), located on Belize's Turneffe Atoll, directly east from the middle of Belize, which, being the only Central American country with English as its first language, makes the place that much more accommodating for non-Spanish speakers, but the flats here are a prime hotspot for fly fishing and diving in any case.

The islands, as a whole, have five or six other lodges besides Turneffe Flats, with options for fly fishing/bait fishing and, of course, the very popular other attraction, diving. Turneffe Flats' rates run from approximately \$4,000 to \$5,000, plus additional costs, per week, depending on season time. In my case, a fly shop had space in their booked week, so I jumped in for a chance at a slam and some time out on the flats. It's a quick flight from Florida to the capital, Belize City. The van that picked us up from the airport dropped us at the Marriott, which was directly in front of the boat dock. Turneffe Atoll is an hour and half to two hours by boat, depending on sea conditions. Some of our group stayed overnight, took some city tours, and relaxed at the pool bar—something I would highly recommend.

My week consisted mostly of going to various flats with a guide, where we would jump out and wade for schools of smaller bonefish, all in the range of two to four pounds. (I would suggest bringing strong flats wading shoes.) In the latter part of the day, we would blind-cast for the larger resident tarpon in the deep channels—but I was a little early for

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the annual migration.

If you're keen on bonefish, there is a resident school right outside the resort. Some of our group got up early or waded on the day's return and caught several small bones just 10 to 20 feet from the lodge. I managed to catch a couple of bones around the five-pound mark, and I did not see any singles that were much bigger than that. Through the week, I had several shots at permit, but didn't land one this time. Apart from getting my casting right—which is always rusty after a long time away from the flats—the permit just seem to be more nervous here than most places. The lodge is open nearly year-round, and once you factor in the five or six other operations that also target them, it makes sense. That's 20 to 30 boats a week, in season. The permit are permit, of course, but here they are educated, so you have to bring your "A" game.

Those who really want to put a permit in the boat can choose to go the other route—which the rest of my group did—but my guide and I did not want to go there. That's the "Run 'n Gun" strategy, wherein you run up and down the shoreline, spook out the permit, and then go back and chase them down. This strategy works, as most of our group caught permit this way and they were very happy, but it's just not my "speed."

Several tarpon were caught, up to the 100-pound mark in our group, by blind-casting to the deep cuts between islands. For me, personally, it's a bit of a soul destroyer, but each to their own, as they say. Once, we did find a feeding school that was crashing baitfish, and that was fun, as I got a hookup with a large "poon," but I didn't land it. Several of us in

the group landed the usual barracuda, snapper, and a few small snook. No one managed a slam in a day, but some managed it over the course of the week.

Because I was the last to sign up, I did not get to choose a guide and did not get one of the most experienced in the bunch. Of course, lodges will always say that all the guides are good, but there are usually one to three that really stand out. So my advice is if you're serious—at any lodge—find out who the top three guides are, the ones that are consistently re-requested by clients. For this trip, I just wanted to get out on the flats and hunt permit, so not having any real mission was just fine with me.

On a side note, it seemed my being British caused some consternation. There is naturally a bit of dislike for Brits in Belize, as it was once British Honduras. My guide's mother, as it happens, used to work as ancillary staff for the British Army before Belize obtained independence. The British government made a payout to the new Belize government, but corruption in many ex-colonized South American nations is rife, and it seems the staff were never paid their pensions. So whether my guide was "angry at the world" or just me, I don't know. Regardless, this guide really had no business guiding paying clients. Anytime I messed up a cast or didn't heed his screaming, panicked instructions, he would pull all sorts of faces and mutter "Belize Creole" curses. The last couple of days we got to talking and he finally started to calm down, and we got to enjoy the rest of the days fishing.

The lodge itself is very comfortable. The rooms are all beach



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front, and excellently maintained, cleaned, and air-conditioned, with a safe in each room. They also have a well-stocked fly shop on the premises. One touch that I especially liked was that they leave a small amount of coffee in your room to make yourself if you get up early.

Turneffe Flats is perfect if you're bringing a non-fishing partner. They have diving, snorkeling, and eco-tours galore. There are lodge staff that go out and manage groups of non-fishing guests, and they provide a great service. The feedback from some wives in our group was very positive. There is also Wi-Fi at the lodge, plus an infinity pool outside the main dining area. That was a particular favorite of mine, with cocktail or beer in hand, after a day's fishing.

Lunch is packed, and breakfast is by order, not buffet. In the evening, there was a happy hour, but it is limited and rationed. Hors d'oeuvres were passed around, but all drinks are added to your bill. There were different evening meals each day but, unusually, no fish. Dining is family style.

Personally, I had more than enough food, but if you have a very large appetite, you may find the meals to be small, as all meals are rationed. Good luck asking for extras; the staff are trained not to provide any. If you have a large appetite, pack some nuts or other snacks, because lunch is also rationed. The explanation is that they are on an island with a weekly supply delivery on guest turnaround day. But having traveled to many lodges far more remote than this one where food is never rationed, I feel it's more about creating a better bottom line. To be sure, these people have run a very tight and smooth operation for many years, and my math tells me they do very well for themselves, as any successful lodge or business should do. But sometimes when you pinch one too many pennies, you may lose several dollars in the end.

Many famous fishermen, artists, and writers have been out to this

lodge over the years, and it's a beautiful piece of paradise. All the staff are very friendly, and you would be hard pressed to find a smoother-run operation, or nicer environment in such an island paradise.

A few weeks later, more at the end of the flats season, I took another last-minute deal with a very good agent in England, Aardvak McLeod (<https://www.aardvarkmcleod.com/>) to fish the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. The lodge was Punta Allen fishing club, another remote location, but accessed this time by a two- to three-hour drive from Cancun airport, past Tulum (famous Mayan ruins) to the end of the peninsula.

This trip was hosted by one of this agency's professional staff members, Alex Jardine, an excellent casting instructor, fly tier, and magazine writer in the UK. The cost was very similar to my trip to Belize (\$4,000–\$5,000 USD depending on season time). This is not counting



extra costs, such as tips, flights, and so on.

Much like Turneffe Flats, this lodge is located where there are at least seven or eight other flats fishing lodges, some well known. They call this the permit capital of the world, and, fittingly, a huge permit sculpture stands at the center of town. The flats fishing has certainly brought great local benefit over the last 30 years to this area.

The fishing was at end of season, and unfortunately, a huge tropical depression hit us the last four days. It was nothing but nonstop rain. There's not much you can do about bad weather, but luckily the lodge had bountiful snacks and beers, even any cocktail you wanted! So, when the monsoon hit it was back to the bar.

Mojitos, margaritas, and caipirinhas were chased with local beers and wine. This seemed to be a complete 180 from the last lodge's policy on food and drink.

The flats had a reasonable number of small schools of bonefish, some in the range of five to eight pounds. Again, quality flats boots are a must here. There were also lots of small snook to be caught in the mangroves, and several schools of resident juvenile tarpon from five up to 20 pounds. We didn't find any schools of migratory tarpon. On top of this, there were lots of schools of smaller-size permit, with the usual tag-along bones and snappers. Thus, it was important to retrieve a little quicker or you would end up with a bone on the line.

We all caught small permit, but missed our shots at much bigger individual permit. We had the best guide at the lodge guiding us. Although he too was definitely a "screamer," he was a lot more instructional, and less of a complaining type. So although we didn't get the big ones in, he did put us on the smaller ones. The funniest memory is all the bones he quickly pulled off our fly, so we could quickly recast at the school of permit. Some of them, being above the five-pound mark, would have made for good picture taking! A few in our company caught the "super-slam" for the week, but not in a day. Who knows what may have happened if the weather had been more helpful.

The lodge is very well run, smaller, with a nice dining area and bar upstairs. Rooms are functional, cleaned daily, and with AC. They even clean your rods and reels nightly with freshwater, and lay them on racks to dry out. We had excellent food at all meals, local and Western mix, with plenty of drinks and hors d'oeuvres at happy hour. Packed lunch boxes were also very generous. The staff were very helpful and courteous. Having Alex host was an added bonus to all on the trip. They rotated guides and

people, so each day you were out with a different experience.

My only suggestion would be to head there at the prime season time, as the weather will more likely be accommodating, and you may find more of the larger migratory tarpon.—  
*Richard Hart*

**DATELINE: MATO GROSSO**

## **Subscriber Report** **A Brazilian** **Multi-Species Adventure**



*Editor Note: This is Richard Hart's second report this month alone. He has been an outstanding source for quality reporting for a while, but this month he has been particularly prolific. Thank you, Richard.*

*Richard has recently been exploring new fisheries deep in the heart of Brazil in the central state of Mato Grosso. There he found a multispecies fishery that fishes well even during less-than-favorable conditions. Richard writes:*

**T**he southern Amazon basin in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso is largely new to Northern Hemisphere fishing clients. Popular among Brazilian anglers for many years, the lodges have begun to reach standards found in the more well-known areas around Manaus and the Rio Negro. This part of the Amazon basin is also a good fishing-holiday destination for Argentineans, since it is an easier and shorter flight for them. In recent years, the lodges here have been looking for

new clients that solely fly-fish. I was invited down to report on the opportunities at one such lodge, Pousada Pesca Vida Dura ([www.pousadapescavidadura.com.br](http://www.pousadapescavidadura.com.br)). It is deep in the southern Amazon basin, far from any town, and you will pass many a farm field and pasture on your way there.

Flights from the United States to Brasilia or São Paulo will get you to several options for a “stepping stone” flight to Alta Floresta, the nearest town to the lodge. My flight with American Airlines was overnight both ways and approximately seven hours. I chose to stay for two days in the capital, Brasilia, which has several hotel and restaurant options where you can relax. From there I took two approximately one-hour flights to Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso, then another flight of about an hour and a half to Alta Floresta. Pousada Pesca Vida Dura has two options for transport in and out of Alta Floresta. One is by truck from Alta Floresta’s airport to the lodge. The ride is four to five hours, depending on road conditions, and costs 4,000 BR (\$1,000) for four people (this includes the return trip). The second option is a one-hour flight, but the cost is 7,000 BR (\$1,750) for five passengers. The lodge has its own runway, so, you can jump out of the plane and into the communal dining room for refreshments (current USD/BR exchange rate as of writing is 1:4).

Depending on flight schedules, the journey (or the return) might require an overnight stay in Alta Floresta (a cost of approximately \$100 USD). My return journey saw me staying at the very basic and comfortable Amazon Floresta, and I had all I needed for a basic one-night stay. The lodge dropped me there and then picked me up the following day in time to catch my scheduled return flight(s) to Brasilia.

The lodge is set up on a large protruding piece of land where the Juruena River splits and runs

on either side. Prime time to fish this region is from March through September, as this is typically low water. Like the northern Guyana waters of the Amazon, and some other southern Amazonian rivers, this destination is most definitely a multispecies setting: piraiba catfish (lau lau) to 300 pounds, jau catfish to 150 pounds, payara (“vampire” fish) to 40 pounds, trahira (“wolf” fish) to 40 pounds, matrinxã to 10 pounds, speckled peacock bass to 20 pounds, bicuda (like barracuda in look and nature) to 20 pounds, butterfly peacock to 6 pounds, plus a host of other smaller fish.

The lodge has very limited Wi-Fi, but does have satellite TV, full AC in all rooms, and a communal dining area. Each room has three beds, but some can fit four; total lodge capacity is 30. The rooms are very well maintained and cleaned. Laundry of shirts and trousers is done daily if required. Bottled water is added daily to the fridge, and clean towels are also provided each day.

There is so much food on the buffet for breakfast, lunch, and dinner that you are going to be hard pressed not to fly back a little heavier. It was mostly traditional Brazilian food, all fresh. There is also as much water, soft drinks, and beer as one would like at no extra charge—not to mention the local specialty cocktail, caipirinha, a great drink after a hot day out fishing in the sun.

The lodge has been operating mainly as a bait-fishing and lure-fishing lodge, with regular clients in the last several years. So, if you’re doing that kind of fishing, they are like many any other lodges in the Amazon basin and very used to the needs of fishermen. As for fly anglers, several Brazilians, clients from other South American countries, and a few Americans and Brits have all fly-fished the river with good success.

The guides are all local fishermen that have grown up fishing this river most of their lives, and they

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know all the spots for the various species. Their English is very limited, so it comes down to the few words you can muster in Portuguese and the limited fishing words they have picked up in English. However, the lodge has explained if they have any group of five or more English-speaking clients, they will ensure that a translator is on hand and, if needed, an English-speaking guide proficient in the nuances of fly fishing.

The 20-foot metal boats have two seats, and in general, it's two anglers per boat. There is plenty of room to store your rods, and tackle bag as well. I had three fly rods that were placed reel end near the boatman's area resting along the side of the boat and extending next to my seat, and there was plenty of space for them. There were large areas to stand in front of each seat, covered in soft rubber matting for ease on the feet and to reduce noise. There was also a large metal casting platform at the front, which I comfortably managed to fly cast from. A suggestion would be to bring a large towel that could be soaked and used as more fly-line-friendly flooring, or pack one of the many fly-line mats for sale online. The Yamaha engines do approximately 40 mph, and the boatman also had a Minn Kota trolling motor for cruising along the bank edges, but when quiet was needed, he used a simple wooden oar.

The guides loaded the cooler each morning with the drinks we requested and were ready to leave the dock at 6 a.m. Lunch is taken back at the lodge, followed by a siesta, and we were back out at 3 p.m. until 6:30, just before dusk. July should have been low water, but unfortunately, the weather was not playing along, and I was dealing with water levels much higher than normal. Thus, the fish were not as concentrated as a fly fisherman would have liked.

There are fishing spots within

sight of the lodge and dock. The furthest we fished was maybe a 30-minute boat ride from the lodge. I fished mainly from the boat but often jumped out onto rocks to cast at fish, sometimes onto the many sand flats along the river. My footwear consisted of good long white socks and a pair of crocs. I would simply fish in my socks from the boat, as there were fewer chances for fly-line entanglement.

My fly-fishing tackle setup consisted of the new Sage HD rods, chosen for the ease of casting larger flies and less false casting. They have the quick-loading action needed



for these jungle waters. I used an 8-weight for casting two- or three-inch Clousers and baitfish imitations like EP flies and streamers. I used an intermediate RIO Flats Pro line to get the fly down to where the fish were holding in the heat. The flies need to be cast close to the bank or obvious structures, and as the fly sinks or the line takes it down, there's the chance of an ambush attack. The most common bites in this scenario were bicuda, peacock bass, and smaller trahira.

My second rod was a 10-weight loaded with the RIO Flats Pro floating line, and the largest popper I could cast with ease at 40 to 50 feet. The Pole Dancer surface fly worked just as well. Anything with some white or a little red and yellow were best. Again, as we cruised along the bank edges, I would cast at structure. I hooked peacock, bicuda, and trahira this way.

The third rod was for the large-size trahira I was hoping for. For this, I was casting a 12-weight rod

with a sink-tip RIO Flats Pro loaded on my Tibor Signature Series 11/12. I would let loose flies three to five inches long. Then, as the line sank, I would slowly retrieve along the bottom, hoping to wake a sleeping trahira where the boatman knew they liked to rest in the daytime. I hooked two or three this way, but lost them before I could get the fish to the boat. The largest I landed was about 13 pounds. The bait-fishing guys landed several to 40 pounds.

Payara, more commonly called, vampire fish, are fun on the fly, because once hooked they run and jump with acrobatic abandon trying to throw the hook. For these, strong and almost needle-like hooks—along with a couple of hard strip strikes—might get your hook deep enough into their mouth. We would cast upstream of the flow, often below large rapids created by the many boulders in the river, and as the heavy weighted fly sank, normally a four-inch streamer, they would strike. Anything with white worked well, the fish would strike from their holding place deep in the pool. In some spots, I couldn't cast without hooking into one. Most of my fish were in the three- to six-pound range. Some of the bait-fishing guys landed payara above 20 pounds.

All of my leaders and class tippets were RIO. For most of the fishing, a base leader of five to seven feet in 20 to 30 pounds worked well, plus a 30- to 40-pound shock tippet. I added a couple of inches of wire bite tippet, a personal preference, as most fish have teeth in the Amazon. This area of the Amazon had no piranha, which was a bonus, as they often bite your line, and sometimes your fly line.

If it's your first time in the Amazon, here are a few pointers for packing your luggage and pretrip planning. First and foremost, take out good trip insurance. My advice is to read the fine print, as many trip insurance policies offered have a lot of "get-out" clauses. Then take out

a separate medical coverage policy. Sometimes this is offered when you book through a good credit card. My strong suggestion is to sign up for yearly insurance, especially if you travel to a few far-flung destinations. Make sure it covers evacuation costs. I use Global Rescue ([www.globalrescue.com](http://www.globalrescue.com)).

As for a good supplementary packing list to your fishing gear, include excellent brown/gray-colored sunglasses (i.e., Costa); a couple of Buffs; gloves; long-sleeve shirts, long trousers; and a wide-brimmed hat with black underneath to help seeing in the water through sunglasses. The more you cover your skin in the middle of the day, the more you'll enjoy the fishing. Speaking of sun protection, also bring a good waterproof 50+ SPF sunblock, to be reapplied, as the hot weather and sweat takes it off.

Good pliers and line/wire cutters; a quality camera; I always carry duct tape, and fast-dry extra-strong glue, just in case something needs a temporary fix on the water. Have a boat bag, not only for your fishing gear, but any essentials, and an easily packable set of rainproof trousers and jacket. Amazon rains are often fast upon you, and generally don't last too long.

A good DEET-content insect repellent for evening hours is also a must. Although malaria and dengue fever are present in Brazil, an encounter is highly unlikely, and there have been very few reported cases. Just use good cover and protection, as there are plenty of mosquitoes. Get a yellow fever vaccination if you haven't done so already. It's better to be on the safe side. The CDC, and WHO also recommend other vaccines for Brazil:

typhoid, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies, and influenza.

I plan to return with the owners and USA agents in September, when water levels should drop even farther and fly-fishing opportunities increase as the fish become more concentrated. The lodge owners, Eduardo and Claudio, can be contacted through the website, but for a better English conversation I would suggest contacting Glaucio Gapski, their USA agent; [glaucio@labadeesportfishing.com.br](mailto:glaucio@labadeesportfishing.com.br). He will arrange group trips of four up to 30.

The lodge costs 1,500 BR per day, all-inclusive. At the current exchange rate that's approximately \$375-\$400 USD per day, which is an amazing price considering all that's included. So, a seven-day lodge stay is less than \$2,800 USD. Tips for staff and guides, as always, are discretionary. Enjoy!—*Richard Hart*

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## • Briefly Noted •

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### Things to Do . . . Places to Go . . . New Developments

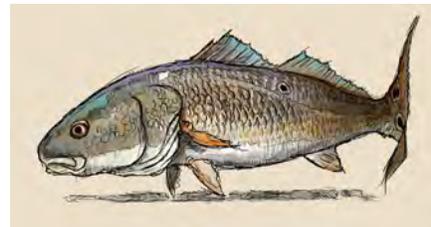
■ Roger Lynberg recently sent us this brief report on a trip to Panama City Beach, **Florida** to chase redbfish. It sounds like there is a budding fishery in the area that could be a great addition to any vacation plans one might have for visiting Florida's panhandle. Roger had this to say about his trip:

"It has been years and many trips since I shared an adventure with my fellow readers, but I wanted to share my experience on a recent trip to chase redbfish in Florida.

"I had once heard that Panama City beaches were simply world class and the offshore fishing around Panama City Beach was very good, all of which made it a favored vacation spot for many folks from nearby states. What I didn't know until I found Captain Shepard (aka Shep), owner of Fly Times Fishing Charters, was that the redbfish bite is great too.

"So, a few weeks ago in mid-June, I set off for Florida intent on

spending a few days on a casting platform and wade-fishing on hard-packed grassy flats for redbfish and trout. The day before my first outing, I made contact with Captain Shepard. We talked about the usual stuff, and although he said the water temps were now hovering near 80 degrees on the flats, an early-morning start with the



tides in our favor should produce some shots at tailing redbfish.

"Needless to say, sleep came slow with the anticipation of the upcoming day on the flats. I'm sure most, if not all, of my readers appreciate the mesmerizing sight of clear water and vibrant sea grass, viewed from the bow of a boat while searching for

fish. These thoughts can make for a restless night.

"Finally, the day was at hand. We entered our first lagoon, which was less than 18 inches in depth and appeared to be so large as to run to the Atlantic Ocean. Before long, the inner sirens exploded as I saw several tails flapping in the early morning sun. You could easily mistake them for the largest Seychelles or Cuban bonefish you could imagine, but these tails were adorned with beautiful spots. It was just a magnificent sight. The captain placed me in casting position with such ease and stealth that the only thing that could go wrong would be my presentation, and that's an understatement. I dropped an absolute bomb on those three redbfish, which were each a solid 10 to 12 pounds. Well, those three are most likely in Louisiana by now. I was left on the bow whispering a few choice words to myself.

"Nevertheless, Shep had me on

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more reds shortly, and by midday my rotator cuff was singing a new song, as I found myself holding a beautiful 32-inch redfish, which ended up being the largest fish I caught. It took me so far into the backing that I was already planning another trip to PCB while the battle with this fish was still ongoing.

“As is common with most guides, Shep has his own select arsenal of flies, which he readily ties on your bite tippet. If you tie your own flies, Captain Shepard will even send one home with you to duplicate. All this Southern charm negated the cloudy weather, which seemed to move in on us each day. In times of inclement weather, Shep would find a school of marauding jacks to chase, or areas where blind casting is the ticket.

“If I were to offer any suggestions to Captain Shepard, it would be to estimate the distance of the fish when he calls out the direction, because these fish blend in with the grass so easily.

“Panama City Beach has an abundance of hotels and restaurants and some great flats that will soon have you experiencing the thrill of fishing line bursting through the guides.”

*Postscript:* You can contact Captain Shepard at (850)775-8119 and [www.flytimesfishingcharters.com](http://www.flytimesfishingcharters.com).

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■ So, what is the latest on those flats-fishing regulations in the **Bahamas** that require all flats anglers to buy a fishing license? The issuance of the regulations, you probably recall, created a tidal wave of concern because it was not clear how anglers could obtain a license. An early version of the regulations also appeared to place limits on fishing on your own. A real clinker was the inclusion of a provision making it mandatory that non-Bahamians, even ex-pats with second homes in the Bahamas, hire a guide to fish from any kind of boat, even one they bought themselves and legally imported into the Bahamas.

Unfortunately, that latter provision still appears in the latest version of the regulations, and it is continuing to create a huge uproar among ex-pats.

As for the license requirement for guided anglers, concern over that appears to have declined because of a change in policy allowing lodge owners and independent guides to buy and hold licenses in advance for their clients. The cost of the licenses, fortunately, is not excessive at \$15/day; \$20/week; \$30/month; or \$60/year. Of course, do-it-yourself anglers are still going to have a problem buying a license because they are not available online. They have to be purchased on arrival at the local administrator’s office, and that raises the possibility of no one being there after you have gone to the trouble of finding where that office is and then driving over there. Worse, there is also the possibility the administrator won’t have any licenses on hand, or even know what you are talking about. Arrgh!

Make no mistake, the turmoil over licenses and the conflict that preceded their issuance has cost the Bahamas a lot of business. Many lodges are hurting, especially locally owned Out Islands lodges with little support from international booking agents. You’ll be doing Bahamas operators a great favor if you forget the recent turmoil and step up to the plate and go fishing. To sweeten the pot, as this is written, the Bahamas Out Island Promotion Board is backing some special promotions that include free airfare to and from certain Out Islands lodges. You can read about the offers in a foldout brochure called 2019 Islands of the Bahamas Fishing Map. You can order a copy from Robert Ulrich at: [Robert.mmgl@gmail.com](mailto:Robert.mmgl@gmail.com). Here are just two of the offers listed on the brochure: Chester’s Highway Inn Bonefish Lodge on Acklins Island ([www.chestersbonefishlodge.com](http://www.chestersbonefishlodge.com)) is offering two free tickets from Nassau to Acklins with a weeklong stay, double occupancy; and Swains

Cay Lodge ([www.swainscaylodge.com](http://www.swainscaylodge.com)) on Andros is also offering free air tickets on trips of varying length, plus a \$100 credit on trip packages of four or more days. The brochure also contains other interesting information, such as a list of the independent guides on Abaco Island and a Bahamas Directory of Fishing Lodges and Resorts. Ulrich, who created the brochure, is a gold mine of information about well-known and out-of-the-way lodges. At press time, he said he would be glad to answer questions, as his time permits, from anglers interested in booking a trip. He is not a booking agent and has no commission relationship with any lodges. His phone number is 305-778-5177. Enjoy!—*Don Causey*

•••••

■ The inshore fly fishing for redfish in **Louisiana** has gotten lots of coverage from us, and others, over the years, but precious little has been written about fly fishing around the offshore oil platforms. Perhaps that is about to change, as the Fly Shop of Miami has just announced it is putting together two long-rod trips this fall that will focus on the various species that congregate around these platforms. Here is what is being offered, according to shop owner and manager, Luis Menocal:

“If you have ever wondered what it would be like to go big game fly fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, here is your chance. The two trips I am putting together this coming September will take place off the Louisiana coast. The trip begins with a flight to New Orleans, where we will have a terrific lunch at one of the many fine restaurants that city has to offer. We then go by rented car to Venice (two hours away) to meet our outfitters. Our destination will be the storied blue waters of the Gulf, specifically to some of the offshore oil platforms, where we will be targeting yellowfin tuna, primarily, but also other species such as billfish, dolphin, and others. Lodging will be provided in Venice. On the way home,

we will have another great meal in New Orleans to cap things off.

“There will be two separate trips. One will run from September 9 to September 12, and the other will run from September 19 to September 23. Each trip will include a host from the Fly Shop of Miami (either Kyle or Patrick or me) and three other anglers.

The cost for the first trip, which includes three nights lodging and two days of fishing, is \$2,850 per angler. The cost for the second trip, which includes four nights lodging and three days fishing, is \$3,850 per angler. Transportation to and from the airport in New Orleans to Venice is included, as are lodging and meals in Venice.

With only three anglers allowed on each trip, space is very limited. If you are interested, call or email me right away: Tel. 305-669-5851. Email: info@flyshopofmiami.com.”

*Postscript:* If you go on one of these trips, be sure you file a report. Send it directly to me, Don Causey, at doncausey@msn.com.

## • OUTFITTER CRITIQUES •

### The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Fishing Trip Report Forms. Our policy on these forms is to publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received without censorship. Agents, guides, lodge operators, and/or outfitters who disagree with anything said about them in this section are free to submit a rebuttal. As a subscriber, you can help extend the reach of this program by filing a Fishing Trip Report Form yourself. You should find one inside this issue of your newsletter. Alternately, you can file a report online by going to our website, [www.anglingreport.com](http://www.anglingreport.com), and clicking on “File a Report.”*

■ This report came to us right before our print deadline, and we’re glad it did. In it, subscriber Bryan Whiting describes a yearly pilgrimage to fish the Kanektok River in **Alaska** during the annual king salmon migration. Bryan and his wife have been fishing this location for years, and they always trust Alaska West lodge to get them on the fish. Bryan had this to say about their most recent trip to Alaska:

“Camp is five miles up the Kanektok River from Quinhagak, Alaska, which is at the mouth of the river. We left each day at 8 a.m. and either went up- or downstream, depending on what we desired or what the guide felt was best. Our primary target was king salmon. Thankfully, the king run on the Kanektok is sustaining, which can’t be said for many rivers in Alaska. Even so, catching kings is not like fishing for sockeyes or the silvers of August, when there are literally fish everywhere and constantly in sight and accessible. We took jet boats to the desired gravel bar, depending on the tides, and began swinging for kings. If one bar wasn’t producing, we would either start fishing for sockeyes or move to another bar. My wife, Kathy, loves kings and sockeyes. When king fishing is slow,

she attacks the sockeyes, and she has mastered the sockeye technique.

“We never waded deeper than our knees. The river is easy to wade because there are no large boulders, only small rocks.

“Each day produced kings, but they varied in number. Our worst day saw us land six between us, and our best day 11. Size varied from an average of 20–25 pounds to higher. Each day saw us landing some in the 30s and on occasion one or two in the 40s. The sockeyes were very healthy and fat, 8-10 pounds and responded with their usual acrobatics. It took three hookups to land one, but that was the fun.

“We often would pause and fish for rainbows, which are of the leopard rainbow variety, with spots over their entire body, even in their mouth, and a dominant red stripe that shows up so well in the water that we would sight-fish for them. We would use sculpins or mouse flies on most occasions. One special afternoon we floated a small channel with Jason, our guide, stalking rainbows in beaver ponds and next to the bank of the channel. Each time, we could see the rainbow coming to the fly; the only problem was having patience enough not to pull the mouse fly before the take. We

also caught grayling up to 16 inches with sculpins. They would attack mouse flies too, even though their small mouth prevented hookups. In addition, we caught Dolly Varden, both while fishing for trout and swinging for kings.

“We used a different setup for each species. They were as follows:

- **King salmon**—Pieroway 9-weight Spey rods, Hatch 9+ reels, Airflo lines, sink tips, 20-pound maxima tippet
- **Sockeyes**—Winston and Scott 8-weight single-handed rods, Hatch 7+ reels, Airflo lines
- **Rainbows**—Winston 6-weight and Sage 7-weight rods, Ross Big Game Reels, Airflo lines

“Flies were all guide tied. Tube flies dominated for kings. All color combinations seemed to work: chartreuse, blue, black, orange, pink, sometimes with two small tubes stacked.

“There were no hatches other than the mosquitoes, which were ever present but not to where it negatively affected the fishing. Some anglers wore head nets, others didn’t. The only other thing you might consider a hatch would be the mice.

“The weather was typical for Alaska. There was rain in varying degrees of intensity; temperatures

were highs in the 50s (one day was in the 40s and one in the 60s); and on one day the wind was a factor, but the guides maneuvered to a bar where it was either behind or across us. The fishing was still great.

“There were absolutely no problems on this trip, other than the difficulty of leaving the camp and realizing it will be another year before we can return. The entire trip was a highlight. Alaska West trips are well organized, whether it is transportation to the camp, guides and boats, meals, socializing opportunities, or the condition of the Weatherport tents. Even in remote Alaska, the staff make sure the tents are clean and completely sealed so mosquitoes can't attack. The shower tent is clean and well stocked with towels. The guides even clean the boats each night.

“The people are the real highlight. The staff, including the camp hands, the chef, and the guides, are there to meet your needs. They obviously enjoy being in Alaska and

seem to be having just as much fun as you are. It makes a difference to have a staff that is excited and having



a good time with you, as opposed to one that is just doing a job. The guides are expert Spey casters, so

they can instruct those who are neophytes. Of all the anglers, only one was not a returning guest, and though he hadn't done Spey casting prior to the trip, he caught kings on day one and was soon amazed at how well he did.

“The operations manager, Jason, and head guide, Kyle, are themselves highly requested guides, so they are well aware of what is happening on the river. This is helpful not only for the anglers but also for the other guides.

“The other anglers on the trip were also a delight. As mentioned above, all but one were repeat guests, and most have been coming the same week each season for a number of years. They were a great bunch, fun, easy to get along with, and a pleasure to share the week with. Of course, it's always a highlight to be able to share a fishing trip with my wife as well. I know I am fortunate to have a wife who not only is willing, but looks forward to standing out in the weather swinging for kings. I've

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learned to live with her catching more and bigger fish than I do.

“But above all, the fishing itself was obviously the highlight of the trip, especially the pull of the king salmon. It’s an indescribable thrill and addicting in and of itself. I had a hard time targeting sockeyes or rainbows, because all I could imagine was right then a huge king was going to pass by my position and I wouldn’t have a fly swinging in the water.

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worry free.”

*Postscript:* Bryan Whiting’s trip, booked through Deneki Outdoors (<https://www.deneki.com/alaskawest/>), was priced at \$6,300 for seven nights, six full days of guided fishing.

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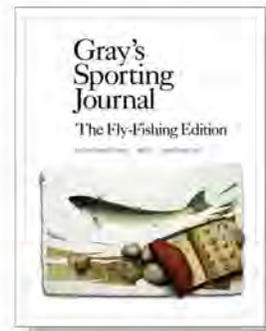
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