



THE ANGLING REPORT

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2009 Vol. 22, No. 4

DATELINE BAHAMAS

FREE Fishing Report Assessing A Self-guided Trip To Acklins Island

(Editor Note: When Vince Tobia at Catta-raugus Creek Outfitters (716-479-2327; www.ccoflyfishing.com) offered a FREE, do-it-yourself bonefishing trip to Acklins Island in the Bahamas, we knew it wouldn't be suitable for just anyone. But we also knew that one of our OnLine Extra subscribers would be up for the challenge. The right man for the job, in this case, was Honor Roll Subscriber Don McLaurin. He went, fished hard in bad weather, and filed the following report. See box on page 3 for more information on our FREE Fishing Program.)

Talk about lucky! Out of a horde of interested Online Extra subscribers, I got the nod recently to go on this newsletter's latest FREE fishing trip – namely, a do-it-yourself bonefishing excursion to Acklins Island in the Bahamas. My longtime fishing buddy, Dan Campbell, decided to come along as a paying guest. I've been an avid bonefisherman for over 20 years, have

heard many good things about the fishing around Acklins and Crooked Islands, and I was excited.

Acklins Island is on the southern-most end of the Bahamas Islands chain, closer to the Turks and Caicos than to Nassau. It is about 90 miles long and only three or four miles wide at its widest point. Chesters Highway Inn, where the trip was



based, is on the northern end of the island, about an hour drive from the airport at Spring Hill.

Acklins Island (Pop. 450) is blessed with miles of productive, wadeable flats. Obviously, you don't come here for night life or other non-fishing amenities – there aren't any. What you come here for is the chance

to really get away from it all and fish miles of peaceful flats without seeing another person.

This is billed as budget-priced, self-guided fishing, and that is exactly what it is: It's a no-frills deal, and it is priced accordingly. When you book this trip through Catta-raugus Creek Outfitters, Vince Tobia sends you a folder with very useful information about getting to, staying on and fishing at Acklins. Included in the folder are several annotated maps and satellite photos of the island pointing out good fishing spots (more on these later). Before the trip, Vince will readily discuss the photos and maps with you by phone or e-mail. The pre-trip briefing is designed to provide all the local knowledge you need to be ready to fish immediately upon arrival at Chesters. Talking to him, you sense that Tobia truly wants you to have a good experience.

The 1½-hour flights to Acklins from Nassau all leave in the morning, which means you have to overnight in Nassau. The trip home, fortunately, can be made in one day. There are flights on Monday with Pineapple Air and Wednesday and Saturday flights on Bahamas Air; round trip on both airlines is around \$400. As Vince recommended, we overnighted in Nassau at The Orange Hill Beach Inn, five minutes from the airport. This is the unofficial Acklins staging point. There were four other Acklins-bound anglers there that night. I would recommend it as no-frills, clean and convenient. There are several restaurants within walking distance.

At Spring Hill Airport on Acklins, we were greeted by Arnett Chisholm, who runs Chesters with her husband, Julius. You immediately sense that Arnett is willing to go the extra mile to make your stay comfortable and

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Outdoors

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pleasant. She uses the drive to give you the history and layout of the island and to familiarize you with the routine at the lodge. Since she also does the cooking, this is a great time to discuss food preferences. However, since she is a wonderful cook, I would recommend letting her surprise you each day with island fare. You will not be disappointed. Especially tasty were the conch fritter appetizers each afternoon, the steamed grouper and the corned beef hash and grits for breakfast (Yes, I'm a southern boy, so the grits made me feel at home.)

Chesters is a small, simple place with room for six anglers. It would be perfect for a party of six friends. Each unit has a sitting room and separate bedroom with private bath. All of the units are air conditioned and very comfortable. Arnett and Julius are a wonderful couple and gracious hosts. I left feeling that I had made new friends. The lodge is only four years old and sits directly across the street from a beautiful flat. So we were fishing almost immediately upon our arrival around 11:00 am – but only after taking a few minutes to have some of Arnett's special lobster chowder. We caught several fish on that flat both that day and on subsequent days.

We were in Acklins the last week in February, not the most reliable time of the year weather-wise. As is so often the case in the Bahamas in winter, we hit a really windy spell and two cold fronts. Four of the five days we

fished the wind blew in the 20- to 25-knot range with 90 percent cloud cover and some rain. This made conditions extremely difficult for fly fishing on the flats. Therefore, I don't think our results in terms of fish caught are an indication of what is normal. We caught a few fish every day but one. That day was so windy and rainy we gave up after a couple of hours of wading the flats.

Despite the bad conditions, you could see how much potential the area has. There were bonefish feeding on every flat we visited. We also spooked quite a few that I'm sure we would have had shots at had there been some sun. I even caught a couple while blind casting out of frustration over the wind and lack of sun. That is a sure indication that there are lots of fish around!

In addition to the flat right at Chesters, which we fully explored by using the Lodge's bikes, we were very impressed with the look of several others on that end of the island. The appropriately named Lovely Bay is easily reached by bike and has more flats than one could possibly fish in a day. This area reputedly has some larger fish, too. Cove point, a longer bike ride, also looked very promising. We visited both of those on one of the worst weather days, so while our results were not stellar, I would not hesitate to recommend trying them based on what we saw and heard from others. Other areas we liked were Snug Corner, Delectable Bay and

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Pinefield Point, all reached in one of the vehicles the lodge rents for \$100/day. Additionally, the area around Atwood Harbor looked promising even though we did not get to fish it due to wind direction. It would be a perfect spot to get dropped off with a couple of kayaks for exploring. The strong winds discouraged us from using the kayaks.

On two days we got Julius to hook us up with guides in hopes of finding some fishable lee-side flats. The flats we went to were just as windy as the others; however, the guides were most accommodating, pleasant and eager to find fish. They had a great ability to see fish. One, Terrence, was more knowledgeable than the others, especially with regard to the needs of fly fishermen. We saw numerous large schools on two of those flats, and Dan caught several from one school before they spooked. I was fortunate to catch a really nice fish in the six-pound-plus range. In reality, the two cold fronts that moved through had chased most of the fish from the flats, and there was nothing anyone can do about that.

The guides used their boats as transportation to distant flats and seemed to be more comfortable wading. However, Terrence did pole in a very pleasant mangrove area for an hour or so in response to our request. I got some great shots there with three or four refusals – again, not the



guide's fault. If you want a break from wading, be sure you make that clear up front. The guides are \$400/day, which is a bargain. Their boats are adequate, but don't expect state-of-the-art flats skiffs – this is the Bahamas Out Islands, after all. Terrence's brother, Elvis, is reputedly the most

experienced guide in the area and he does have a nice-looking flats rig.

The key questions about a new place are: Would you go back, and would you recommend it? To the first I would give an unequivocal and enthusiastic "yes!" In fact, I'm sure I will return to Acklins at a better time of year weather-wise. I would recommend this trip to anyone who has enough experience to enjoy do-it-yourself fishing and who is not looking for a full-service fishing lodge. Driving around a desolate island on bad roads looking for places to hike into some of the flats is not everyone's idea of a good time. But for someone who is just slightly adventurous like me, it is a hoot. As my buddy Dan said one day as we were biking, fly rods in hand, to a flat we wanted to try: "I could be twelve years old!" He and I have fished together since we were that old, so his comment really resonated. However, as I biked back to the lodge that afternoon in a heavy rain, I thought about some other anglers I know who would not be happy campers. This is fishing

Want To Go Fishing Free?

All About Our Free-Fishing Program

■ *The Angling Report* has always valued feedback from its subscribers. And the reasons are clear. For one thing, *Angling Report* subscribers are some of the world's most experienced fishermen. Hence their judgments about places are broad-based and sound. On top of that, most subscribers' insights on trips have a refreshingly candid air about them. That's because they are written from a point of view that no other publication embodies – namely, the paying client point of view.

So, here's the deal. We have begun to encourage lodge owners, guides and others to offer us FREE visits to their facilities with the understanding we will turn these invitations over to *Angling Report* subscribers who convince us they are capable

of writing useful and accurate reports on what they experience. At this point, more than 30 subscribers have been invited on FREE fishing trips here in the US or to places outside the country such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. The value of all that travel is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. And the good news is, more and more outfitters are offering us FREE trips in return for reviews.

If you want to get in on this opportunity, all you have to do is upgrade your subscription to Online Extra. The cost is only \$2 a month for a service that includes: unlimited access to our custom-searchable, 5,000-page database of subscriber reports and previously published articles; early-bird electronic delivery of your newsletter each month; and access to

periodic news bulletins of importance to anglers who travel. At least one of those bulletins each month will describe a FREE FISHING OPPORTUNITY, and it will invite you to tell us why we should select you to take advantage of it.

Sound like fun? Well, what are you waiting for? Sign up right now for Online Extra and get on the list of people invited to go fishing free. The easiest way to sign up is to go to our web site, www.anglingreport.com, and click on "Upgrade to Online Extra." Or, you can call us at 800-272-5656. Just be sure, when you sign up, you send us an e-mail address that you check often. Also, be sure your spam filter is set low enough to let our bulletins get through. Enjoy! – Don Casey, *President/Publisher*.

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on the cheap and on-your-own (unless you get guides every day). That is how the trip is advertised and priced: \$1,499/week/person, double occupancy, for lodging, food and on-your-own access to great fishing.

All considered, despite the lousy weather, this was a great trip. The flats are deserted and beautiful, the Chisholms are gracious hosts, and the peace and quiet is priceless. I am sure,

with good weather, a competent fly fisherman could enjoy eight- or ten-day fish days. – *Don McLaurin.*

(Postscript: McLaurin enjoyed the trip, but he did come away with a list of things he thought could be improved. He sent them to us privately with no idea of including them in his report. However, we think the list provides would-be visitors additional insight into the trip, so here goes:

“Both the Chisholms and Vince made it clear they wanted my feedback so they could provide a better experience in the future. Here are some things I noted. While the information packet Vince sent is useful, it could be greatly upgraded with just a little effort. The maps were faded, with some details gone from being copied over and over. The fishing areas are circled in red with relevant

□ Close-Up: US West

All About “The Snake” In Wyoming And Other Area Streams

By Bill Cenis

(Editor Note: Looking to balance a couple of days of floatfishing on a top-notch trout stream with a few days of on-your-own exploration of readily accessible water? Western correspondent Bill Cenis has found a place in Wyoming you can do just that.)

■ Jackson, Wyoming, is an excellent base of operations if you want to take a guided float trip on a premier western trout river and still be near several other trout streams you can explore and fish on your own. The major stream in the area is the South Fork of the Snake River, commonly known simply as “The Snake.” The target species here is the relatively rare Snake River fine-spotted cutthroat. A cousin to the large-spotted (Yellowstone) cutthroat trout, the fine-spotted species is native to the Snake River drainage. These are wild trout, as opposed to being hatchery fish, and account for over 90 percent of the trout in this part of the Snake. Snake River cutthroats reach 20 inches and three pounds, and occasionally even larger fish are caught. Significantly larger.

The added bonus for anglers coming to the Jackson Hole area to fish the Snake is that the river has major tributaries with good public access: the Gros Ventre, Hoback, Greys and Salt rivers, and Crystal, Granite, and Flat creeks. Over 98 percent of these waters flow through public land. These streams provide an angler the opportunity to explore drive-to, do-it-yourself cutthroat trout fishing.

The Snake and its tributaries flow into and through valleys within view of the soaring peaks of the Teton Mountain range. The setting is spectacular. Here’s a brief look at each waterway. Get yourself a map and follow along (an excellent one is available at http://www.flyfishingjacksonhole.com/regional_overview/snake_river.htm):

South Fork of the Snake: This large and often swift-flowing river near the town of Jackson is tough to wade, so a guided float trip is the way to go. I recommend High Country Flies (866-733-7210; www.highcountryflies.com) located in Jackson. A fly shop and guide service, it has been serving anglers in the area for 35 years. Their website has very detailed information on the river and its tributaries, in-

cluding regulations and access points. There are several other long-established guide services in Jackson and I’ve listed them below.

The South Fork of the Snake has its beginnings in Yellowstone Park. The river is not heavily fished in its upper reaches as there are no roads into that area. Just a few miles south of Yellowstone’s south entrance, where the river is in sight of a road, it attracts more fishing pressure. The Snake next enters Grand Teton National Park and flows into Jackson Lake, behind Jackson Lake Dam. From that point, the river continues through farm and ranch land, past the town of Jackson, into the Snake River Canyon. Then, after a journey of 100 miles, it crosses the state line into Idaho.

Throughout its trajectory in Wyoming, the Snake offers many types of fishing water – pools, riffles, flats and good holding water behind boulders and fallen timber. Near Jackson, the river is about 50 yards wide, but, at times, it forks into several channels.

Because The Snake near Jackson normally has an extended runoff from late April until mid-July, those in the know suggest August through September as the best time to fish. Because of this limited window, those wishing to reserve a guide should do so as far in advance as possible. When the water drops and clears, the trout are hungry and feed furiously.

The Snake does have impressive caddis and stonefly hatches in early June. But, as that is usually runoff time, opportunities to fish those two hatches are limited. During later summer months, dry flies commonly used with success include Royal Wulff, Humpy, Trude, Stimulator, Elk Hair Caddis, among others. Suggested nymphs and streamers are the Prince Nymph, Red Fox Squirrel Tail Nymph, Hare’s Ear, Pheasant Tail, Woolly Bugger, Zonker and Muddler. High Country Flies’ website states: “[The Snake] is not just a dry-fly fishery, but an attractor dry-fly fishery.” They go on to say that they do not match hatches, but rather search the water with medium to large mostly impressionistic fly patterns: “A size 8 fly is not big for us. Smaller versions of

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notes scribbled on the maps. Clearer copies with more extensive notes on a separate sheet about how to find, reach and fish each flat would be a huge improvement. GPS coordinates of important locations would be much appreciated, too, along with exact distances from the lodge. The satellite photos included in the folder are a good resource but they would be even better if they were laminated and

cross referenced to the maps. This would be easy to do. In fact, an angler who was there before us left some laminated satellite photos that we used extensively. As for things around the lodge, I think there should be a better place to wash down and store equipment. Baskets and some sort of rod holders on the bikes would be nice. Also, I think the lodge should consider providing drop-off

and pick-up service at various flats each day a la Christmas Island.)

DATELINE: RUSSIA

News... News... News

**Air Service Update.
Last-Minute Openings**

(Editor Note: There is a lot happening in Russia fishing as this issue goes to press.

these same flies, sizes 14 and 16, work well on the Snake's tributaries. In autumn, be sure you have some hopper patterns on all of these rivers."

Gros Ventre River: The Gros Ventre enters the Snake a short distance north of the town of Jackson. Though cutthroats are the main attraction, smaller numbers of whitefish and rainbow trout also inhabit the river. The best fishing spots are reached via Gros Ventre Road that exits Grand Teton National Park. Just outside the park are a series of parking turnouts that provide easy access to the river. However, wading is not recommended, as the river's current is very strong in places and the bottom can be treacherous. Fortunately, the river can be effectively fished from shore. Crystal Creek, another angling option, feeds the Gros Ventre just above Lower Slide Lake.

Hoback River: Located south of Jackson, the Hoback River can be accessed via Route 189 and 191. There are many parking areas and easy launching spots for rafts. However, land-bound anglers should not venture beyond the parking areas from Stinking Springs to the Spotted Horse Ranch as the land here is private property.

Fishing the Hoback is possible from April to October, though the best fishing is in the months of August and September. This is a classic western trout stream, and there are many spots along the river that provide good fishing for anglers of all skill levels. The Hoback is a good stream to take kids fishing: It is easy to access and easy to wade and the trout tend to sit in the calmer waters by the shoreline, and in deeper runs and pools. Trout average eight to 14 inches, with some larger fish hidden in deep pools.

In late summer, larger cutthroats sometimes invade the Hoback from the Snake seeking cooler water. They can be found in deep water and isolated chilly pools at the river's edge. Granite Creek, which enters the Hoback from the north, above the canyon, is also a fun fishing water. The farther up the creek you go, the calmer the water.

Greys River: Located south of Jackson, Greys River flows about 55 miles near the Wyoming border with Idaho, and enters the Snake not far from the Wyoming town of Alpine. The Greys is a local favorite, offering many access locations with plenty of campgrounds located along its banks.

The best fishing on the Greys begins early July and

lasts through the summer when the river is clearer, shallower and calmer than in the spring. Anglers do need to watch out in whitewater sections, which can prove dangerous for wading. The Greys holds mainly cutthroat trout which average eight to 14 inches.

Salt River: The Salt is best fished near the town of Afton, Wyoming, where the river grows, water quality improves and deep undercut banks hold trout. This same stretch has good public access in about 30 spots along its banks. This stretch holds brookies, browns and rainbows and, of course, the fine-spotted cutthroats. Fish average 10 to 14 inches in length. Normally, the browns will stay in the deep cool waters of Palisades Reservoir until fall.

This river can be a challenge to fish in some stretches, both where the current is swift and strong and in many holding areas where the banks are choked with willows. If you want to wade, plan on doing some walking as much of the good holding water is hidden around great bends in the river not visible from a distance. Summer into fall is the best time to fish the Salt. That is when the caddis, stonefly and PMD hatches take place. Unlike some rivers, matching the hatch is not critical and the fish tend not to be spooked easily. An assortment of eight or nine patterns will do for the entire season. In September and October, big browns up to six pounds head out of Palisades Reservoir into the Salt, and streamers are the favorite flies when targeting them.

The Snake and each of its tributaries have special regulations on trout seasons, catch-and-release, possession limits and in some cases, sections closed to fishing. Be sure you read the regulations to stay out of trouble. All of these waters are close enough to Jackson and to Idaho Falls, Idaho, to allow a comfortable day trip. Vehicle rentals are available in both towns, and both are home to airports. For more information, including lodging and other guide services, go to www.jacksonholechamber.com. Among the guide services listed there are Reel Deal Anglers (877-744-0522; www.reeldealanglers.com); Teton Floats (307-413-4464; www.tetonfloats.com); Snake River Angler, (888-998-7688; www.snakeriverangler.com); Jackson Hole Anglers (888-458-7688; www.jacksonholeanglers.com); and Mangis Guides (800-850-1220; www.mangisguides.com).
Enjoy! – *Bill Cenis*

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Managing Editor Tim Jones filed this last-minute report.)

As this issue goes to press, rumors are flying about those Anchorage/Petropavlosk flights anglers used to such great advantage last year to gain access to the rainbow trout fishery on the Kamchatka Peninsula. You might recall that this service ran without a hitch all of last season and until recently there's been absolutely no reason to believe it wouldn't work perfectly this season as well.

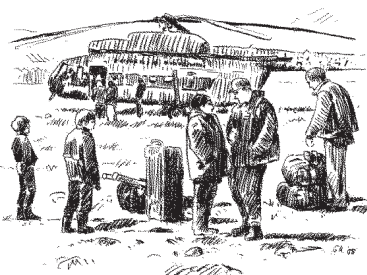
What has caused the rumors to fly at this writing is some talk about the air service provider, Vladivostok Air, needing a "guaranteed" number of seats in order to make the route profitable. The issue emerged at a meeting with interested parties on March 11. Kenji Hanaoka, the US spokesperson for Vladivostok Air, had this to say in an e-mail we received on March 16:

"The economic situation in the United States is worse than at the time we planned for the operation in October, 2008. Therefore, we must adjust the supply of seats to meet with the demand. That is why we had a meeting with our partners to double-check if they have the passengers which they had predicted last year. The flights from Anchorage-Kamchatka are also sold in Japan, Korea and Russia; we serve hunters, students, scientists and others. We have been asking all our sales partners to check if we are really going to have an average of 60 passengers per flight.

"We have seen poor bookings for the first flight (originally scheduled for July 10) and also the flights originally scheduled August 28, September 4 and 11. Therefore, we have asked our partners if they can get the number of passengers they once predicted. We can still operate those flights, and we expect to hear the results from our partners by March 20.

"We have seen strong demand for the July 18 to August 22 flights. Therefore, we have no intention to cancel those flights...."

Ambiguity about some flights is not the only issue in play as this is written. Seems the departure date of all flights has been changed, too, from Friday to Saturday, which may throw a monkey wrench into plans already made by some Kamchatka-bound anglers. Flights from the Lower 48 to Anchorage, for example, may need to be changed. Ditto hotel accommodations in that city. Hanaoka tells us that this change was made because the designated aircraft has been changed. The Tu-154M originally assigned to the route has been replaced by an A-320-200, and the latter plane is not available for Friday departures. As we lock up this issue, the news of this change is just beginning to trickle out to the public.



Even before the rumors began, Paul Allred at Ouzel Expeditions (800-825-8196; www.ouzel.com) had made the decision to route his clients via Moscow. "It allows our anglers to reach Moscow on an overnight flight, clear customs there, take another overnight flight to Petropavlosk, spend eight days on the river and a day in town after they are off the river, which works for our schedule."

Likewise Rene Limeres of Ultimate Rivers (907-688-6535; www.ultimaterivers.com) has chosen to fly his clients via Moscow. Ouzel and Ultimate Rivers are both relatively small float-trip operations and their decision should have little or no impact on the success of the Vladivostok Air route. We are following the air service story closely and will relay new developments immediately via e-mail to subscribers who have

upgraded to Online Extra. See page 2 for details on upgrading your subscription....

Still on the subject of Kamchatka, we told you last month that there are rods and prices available there right now that haven't been accessible in the past and may not be again in the future. Kamchatka traditionally sells out early. Here are some examples:

At the Fly Shop (www.flyshop.com), Ryan Peterson lists these availabilities: For a Sedanka Float Trip (\$5,895), he has four rods each for August 1-7 and August 8-14. At the Lower Sedanka Jet-Boat Camp (\$5,895) he has one rod available for July 18-24; four rods for July 25-31 and August 1-7; and two rods August 15-21. He also has two exploratory float trips (\$5,395) with four rods available August 8-14; and six rods August 15-21. All of these listings work within the new Vladivostok Air flight framework – that is, with flights departing Saturday, not Friday.

Likewise, Will Blair at The Best of Kamchatka (877-707-0880; www.thebestofkamchatka.com) says he has rods available for each week of the guaranteed Anchorage/Petropavlosk flights, July 18 through August 22, on both the Ozernaya and the Two Yurt. He's willing to take \$1,000 off the original price, he tells us, making the cost \$4,850/week.

Other openings include: Kent Lindvall of FishingNorth (011-46-928010088; www.fishingnorth.com/?lang=eng) has six rods available on a float trip on Kamchatka's Kolpakova River September 3-11 at a price of 2,950 Euros. Paul Allred at Ouzel (contact info above) says he has four rods available on his August 21-28 float trip; and two rods on his August 28 to September 4 float. Allred says his float trips run eight days on the river and include nine days in Kamchatka. The price is \$5,450, plus \$300 for visa invitation and fishing license. Clients will depart the US on Wednesday and fly through Moscow. One night of lodging at the trip's end and meals in town are not included.

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Rene Limeres (contact info above) didn't offer any specific openings he wanted to fill, but indicated that he could probably accommodate another last-minute angler or two. Move quickly if you are interested....

Over on the Kola Peninsula there were some prime openings available, too. Many of these (the Varzuga in early June, the Ponoï in late June and September and any rods at the main camp on the Yokanga), probably would not have been available last season. Here are some details:

Charlie White at Roxtons Worldwide (Tel. 011-44-1488-689-701; www.roxtons.com) has four rods on the Kitz/Lower Varzuga available June 5 – 13. Cost is £5,000 per rod, which includes the fishing and the charter flight from London to Murmansk, but not visas or a night of lodging at Stansted Airport near London. "The normal price for this week is £6,485," White said at press time. "The seven-year average catch per rod per week for this period is 37 fish. Note that for this week you fly out on a Friday but get back on a Saturday, which means you get an extra day of fishing. You

will be fishing floating lines at Lower Varzuga and most likely sink tips at Kitz (although possible floating depending on the spring), and you fish two different rivers in the same week which is unique. Please note that we are priced in sterling which might appeal to some of your readers given the weakness of our currency."



Kent Lindvall of FishingNorth (contact info above) has six rods on the Upper Yokanga June 27 to July 4 for 2,650 Euro; and four rods at a "Secret River" tent camp July 3-10 for 2,250 Euro. These prices include a helicopter from Murmansk, licenses, food, accommodations and guides.

Mollie Fitzgerald at Frontiers

International (Tel. 800-245-1950; www.frontierstravel.com) had this to say about openings: "We still have rods open at Ryabaga on the Ponoï in some prime weeks, including June 20-27 and September. The dates are ever changing, but please assure your readers we have some super PRIME space open. We also have a special value in our 'Salmon Academy' Aug 15-22 at \$5,200.

Fly Fish Yokanga (011-44-1367-850562, www.flyfishergroup.com) still had several openings at press time for the week of July 11 – 18 at £6,750 per rod from Murmansk. They will offer a discount for a group depending on size.

Steffen Juhl of Club Lax-a (011-354-557-6100; www.lax-a.is) also still had many openings at press time, including June and July at the Acha camp upstream on the Ponoï; Ponoï/Acha float trips in June; the Umba during that river's prime weeks in September; the Varzina and Yokanga during June and July; and the Kola/Kitsa river lodge-based fishing during the prime June and early-July slot for big fish. – *Tim Jones.*

Briefly Noted

Things To Do... Places To Go... New Developments

■ Everyone has seen those terrible ads about **Jamaica**. They have a Reggae backbeat and they encourage the listener and viewer to "Come to Jamaica and feel all right." I say they are terrible because they resonate with a lot of non-fishing spouses who immediately want to devote a perfectly good week to visiting a Caribbean island that has no history of offering inshore fly and light tackle fishing. What a waste!

We know mild domestic discord is created by these ads because we have had a couple of calls recently from subscribers begging us to find some fishing for them in Jamaica. And, boy, have we tried. We started the way most people do nowadays by surfing

the web. And, frankly, we didn't turn up very much other than offshore blue-water fishing.

There was some out-of-date scuttlebutt on the web about a start-up, fly-fishing-only outfit in Jamaica called Salty Anglers, run by a Texan named Vic Shirley. Early reports indicated limited water (not surprising for a volcanic island arising from deep water), persistent daytime winds that kicked in just as sight fishing became possible and few or no fish. One reporter described Shirley's operation as "a 14-foot tin can, no equipment, no fish, no clue." Shirley seems to have disappeared pretty quickly and the web links we found for him have gone dead.

Our next inquiry was to a Dr. Ron DuQuesnay, chairman of a private fishing club called Sir Henry Morgan Anglers of Jamaica. We asked him if there was any hope of finding light tackle or fly fishing around the island. His reply was pretty forthright: "I know of no club or individual who regularly goes fishing with line lighter than 30-pound test, or with fly-fishing gear. Moreover, the inland and inshore waters of Jamaica are generally over-fished."

Indeed, there does seem to be a substantial subsistence fishery in Jamaica. It's so substantial the government is taking steps to create nine marine sanctuaries and strictly enforce no-fishing rules for them. The

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goal is not to rejuvenate the local fishery, however, but to preserve seed stocks for commercial food fishing.

As we dug deeper into the Jamaican fishing scene, we were directed to a web site called Fish-Jamaica (876-965-0743; www.fish-jamaica.com), which is run by an American expatriate by the name of Kory South. He carries the title of General Manager of the Sunset Resort & Villas on Treasure Beach in St. Elizabeth. The web site promises "...simply the best deep-sea fishing you can ever experience." The focus of the fishing is clearly trolling with conventional gear for wahoo, kingfish, mahi mahi and various tuna and mackerel. We called South anyway to get his perspective on local fishing. He couldn't quite see why anyone would want to do anything but troll for wahoo and kingfish, but he did mention that some of the guides he books conduct tours on the Black River. He noted that they often saw rolling tarpon and snook. He suggested that one of his guides, Bernard "Bebe" Sutherland, might know where and how to fish for them.

So we called Sutherland (876-433-0252; E-mail: bebesplace@yahoo.com), who made it clear that he doesn't have any tackle or any experience, but that he did know places where you could certainly cast to tarpon and snook and perhaps jacks and barracuda. He normally charges \$50/hour for trolling, he says. He did not mention a price for taking one out on the Black River.

Clearly, none of this is very promising, but here at *The Angling Report*, we are going to try to put together a plan to check this fishery out. In the meantime, if you are going to Jamaica anyway and you feel moved to bring the right kind of tackle along, we'd sure like to have an on-site report. A place on our Subscriber Honor Roll is assured to the subscriber who files the first letter-length report. See page 2 for more details on our Subscriber Honor Roll Program. – *Tim Jones*.

(Postscript: At press time, Kory South – see above – e-mailed us with a re-

port that he'd just seen some bonefish landed on his beach, the first he'd ever seen there. "The fish are definitely there if someone would like to try for them," he wrote. "Only problem is, we don't have a flat-bottom boat. Is it possible to fly fish from a canoe? We are a little behind the times here, but that's what makes Jamaica so charming, if you know what I mean.")

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■ Almost all experienced Amazon fishermen will tell you that peacock bass are addictive. That's particularly true if they have "hit it right," as they say in the Amazon. What's meant by that expression is you have gone to a part of the Amazon where water levels are like Goldilocks' porridge – that is, not so high the fish have dispersed into the trees or so low that normally



productive tributaries have dried up or become unreachable.

Indeed, unpredictable water levels are a problem in the Amazon. Rivers can rise unexpectedly in one part of the Amazon and just as unexpectedly fall in another, all without reference to local weather conditions. The rainfall, or lack thereof, can be occurring many hundreds of miles away. The past two years have been particularly frustrating for peacock bass outfitters, many of whom have found themselves confronted with week after week of completely unexpected – and un-fishable – water levels. Reputable outfitters have had to cancel, or reschedule, a lot of trips.

Ultimately, there is not a lot of outfitters with stationary facilities can do about unpredictable water levels except stay flexible in their schedules

and honest with their clients about water levels. Those who operate boats can move them to different tributaries, of course, if they have permission and the logistical capability to fish in more than one location. One outfitter who has been particularly adept at doing this is River Plate Outfitters (www.riverplateoutfitters.com), which has eight positive reports in our files. River Plate uses highly mobile floating tent camps that can be towed into extremely shallow waters.

A brand-new and as yet untested way to deal with capricious water levels in the Amazon has just been announced by Joe Daniel of Wild on The Fly Travel (866-723-7776; email: info@wildonthefly.com). He has created what he calls "The Peacock Bass Waiting List." Here is how he describes what he is up to:

"Water conditions throughout the Amazon can change quickly and the changes can be very localized. That coupled with virtually no means of communication from most of the remote areas that hold big fish makes it a crap shoot as to whether or not conditions will be favorable for good fishing. The only real way to insure low water is to have it confirmed in advance and then get there quickly. And that is the basis of our new plan.

"The outfitter we are working with, Octavio Salles, has hired an associate who will spend approximately four months next season traveling by boat and plane throughout prime peacock bass areas, monitoring water-level conditions. He will be equipped with a satellite phone. When good conditions are verified, Octavio will call anglers on the waiting list in the order they signed up. Trips may occur during two time periods: October 12 to December 12; and January 7 to March 7. Participating anglers will then fly to Manaus within seven days, spend the night, then fly upriver to Barcelos where they will be transferred to a riverboat that will serve as a floating lodge for the week.

"The Peacock Bass Waiting List requires a \$1,200 non-refundable de-

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posit, which can be rolled over to the following season. The total cost of the trip is \$4,000, not including air travel or hotel in Manaus....”

So, will this new waiting-list approach to peacock bass fishing really work? For sure, we wish Joe Daniel well, and we salute anyone who has the temerity to try something new in the way of angling travel. But, in truth, we have some reservations about his plan. For starters, we do not have any subscriber-written reports on the outfitter Daniel plans to use – namely, Octavio Salles. He may or may not be the best outfitter in the Amazon but for sure he is not one of the largest and most distinguished. Second, having access only to rivers that can be fished out of Barcelos may or may not help all of the people on his waiting list find good water levels. And that’s important because the plan calls for a non-refundable deposit of \$1,200.

Third, we are not sure how easy it is going to be to find last-minute airline seats on flights to Manaus. And, finally, there is the matter of visas. Last-minute travelers are going to have to be sure their visas are valid for the dates they pick for their trips.

All of that said, Daniel’s plan attempts to address a very real problem. If you sign up for his Peacock Bass Waiting List and you go on a trip as a result, do file a report.

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■ Still on the subject of peacock bass, and related to the water level problem, there is an organization and related website Amazon afficianods need to know about. The organization is the Peacock Bass Association (www.peacockbassassociation.com), which is ably led by Larry Larsen, who has brought together most of the major players in the world of peacock bass fishing. He has created an organization dedicated to promoting fishing for, and conservation of peacock bass. For example, PBA is focusing on promoting catch and release of peacock bass, and is training guides and counseling anglers on the proper method

of returning fish to the water. It’s especially important that larger fish, which fight harder and need more recovery time, be released in very shallow water where they have a better chance of escaping piranhas and other predators, Larsen says.

PBA, it is worth noting, publishes a monthly, members-only e-zine called *The World of Peacock Bass*. It also maintains directories of outfitters, agents and taxidermists who can handle replica displays of trophy peacocks. Perhaps most significantly, the organization’s web site also has a forum with real-time information on Amazon weather and water conditions. This latter information is available to all web site visitors.



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■ Take note, **Alaska** fans. The Board of Fisheries up that way has voted to ban felt-soled wading shoes in fresh waters of Southeast Alaska beginning 2011. As in other areas, this regulation is intended to slow the spread of fish diseases and invasive species.

Alaska is divided into three regions for regulatory purposes - Southeast, South Central and Interior. Because the Board hears proposals for regulation changes on a schedule that applies only to specific regions of the state, this regulation is currently set only for the Southeast Region. At a later date, when they hear regulations that apply to Southcentral (Bristol Bay), they very likely will adopt a similar ban on felt-soled boots.

The other regulation change in Southeast Alaska which may impact

Angling Report subscribers is a ban on steelhead harvest in certain high-use areas, including streams in the Ketchikan, Prince of Wales, Petersburg, and Sitka management areas.

You can get more details on the above developments at: <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/eonr/nr.cfm?id=1040>; or by contacting Bob Chadwick, SE Regional Management Coordinator, 907-747-5551.

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■ Continuing subscribers will remember our review not so long ago of a book on **muskie fishing** called *Muskie on the Fly*. The author is Robert S. Tomes, and we thought so much of his book that we now offer it for sale on our web site, www.anglingreport.com. Indeed, catching a muskie on the fly is a challenge that appears to have seized the imagination of quite a few fly fishermen, including subscriber William Flader, who checked in this past month with a report on a guide in Wisconsin who recently helped him catch a muskie on a fly. He writes:

“Fly fishing for muskies isn’t such a crazy and fruitless idea if you choose the Hayward area of northwest Wisconsin and you link up with one of the handful of guides there who specializes in fly fishing for these toothy, moody critters. A recent mid-November day with guide Tom Greenup yielded three small (24-inch) northern pike, a 20-inch walleye and a 40-inch muskie, all on eight-inch streamers using a 9 wt fast-action rod.

“A well-known muskie fanatic in the area caught two muskies the day before I went fishing, both in the 30-inch category. He says he saw larger ones. Two weeks earlier, two very experienced local fly anglers fishing with Tom Greenup boated huge muskies at the same time measuring 45 and 51 inches!

“Tom can provide visiting anglers fly gear and flies if needed, and lodging at his small resort. If the lower Chippewa River is Tom’s choice on a given day, he has private launch and

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take-out sites there. This greatly facilitates access to a stretch of river that is otherwise not easily floated. He fishes from a 14-foot Hyde drift boat, and he charges \$350 per day for one or two anglers. Tom can be reached at 715-945-2781. E-mail: tom@ashegonlakeresort.com.”

□

■ Is Cuba effectively open to US anglers? There is a lot of talk to that effect in the wake of the Obama Administration’s move last month to loosen restrictions on travel to the island nation by Americans with close relatives in Cuba. What’s sparked all the talk is the way the restrictions were loosened – namely, the US Congress cut off funding for the enforcement of that part of the Cuba travel ban that deals with Cuban Americans. Seems some observers have jumped to the conclusion that all funding for enforcement of the Cuban travel ban has been cut off.

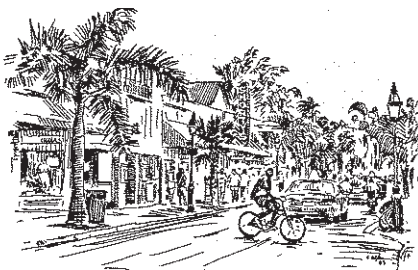
Not so. We have that directly from Office of Foreign Assets Control, the Treasury Department Office that manages the Cuban Sanctions Program. Ms Heather Wong at OFAC gave us that interpretation in no uncertain terms.

To be sure, Ms Wong did not return our repeated calls, preferring to communicate via Blackberry, so we did not have an opportunity to inquire just how funding for part of the ban can be slashed and not for others. In truth, overall enforcement has probably been de-emphasized, given the stated interest of the Obama Administration in lifting the ban entirely. This does not mean we are suggesting that anyone ignore the continuing ban on travel to Cuba, however. It’s still officially illegal for Americans to go to Cuba, and a lot of things can still go wrong before the door to Cuba is finally open. Things like the Russians shopping for a place in Latin America to base strategic bombers. And, more likely still, things like Raoul Castro getting cold feet at the prospect of an invasion of American tourists. In the past, it has been largely Cuba’s fault that nego-

tiations to end the travel ban have failed. Stay tuned....

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■ And, finally, are independent guides in the Florida Keys losing their control over fishing in that part of the world? What inspires us to ask that question is a mini-wave of new developments down that way. For starters, a genuine full-service fishing lodge – the first of its kind in the Florida Keys - has emerged. We’ve told you about this lodge before. It’s called Bahia Honda Sporting Club (www.bahiahondaclub.com), and it is the brainchild of a former rodeo star and Bahamas guide by the name of Gordon Baggett. As this is written, the lodge is gearing up for its eighth season just north of Key West.



No one – repeat NO ONE – thought Bahia Honda Sporting Club would survive beyond its first year. After all, the Florida Keys is a place where individual fishing clients make their own land arrangements after coming to an agreement about fishing with an independent guide. Why that has always been the case is anyone’s guess, as lodging options in many parts of The Keys are quite limited.

One frustrated Florida Keys client who called *The Angling Report* offices a few years ago complained of having been lodged in a sort of floating mobile home that rocked and swayed all night, periodically colliding with a piling. When it did, it made a huge booming sound that made sleep impossible. Another subscriber complained of having been lodged at Holiday Isle in Islamorada where the problem was not booms but

whoops emanating from revelers until all hours of the night. The logic of starting a lodge – many lodges – in the midst of this kind of thing is overwhelming once you get around the separate reality independent guides have created in the Florida Keys.

That separate reality, of course, includes an upside down value structure that gives guides the right to abuse their clients. Berate them. Scream at them. Blame them for lost fish. *The Angling Report* has actually received subscriber reports detailing instances of unbelievable abuse. One hapless subscriber said a Florida Keys guide shouted at his wife until she was in tears. Why the subscriber allowed this to happen is one of the great mysteries this newsletter has pondered for the last 25 years.

But back to new developments in the Keys.... Not so very far from Bahia Honda Sporting Club, another enterprising operator has emerged recently. Actually, the operators (plural) are a couple – Fred and Penny Wheeler – who have begun to operate a mothership in The Keys. They call their operation Outpost Expeditions (www.outpostexpeditions.com). The two spend most of their time offering custom trips in the Bahamas, but seasonally (May and June) they operate in the Keys, mostly in The Marquesas.

To be sure, the Wheelers use independent guides when they operate in The Keys. Many of their clients, they say, already have a relationship with a guide. Others don’t, and the Wheelers handle all the arrangements. Clearly, Outpost Expeditions is no direct threat to the independent guide establishment in the Florida Keys. Still, it does represent a move away from the traditional guide-centered way of doing things in The Keys.

Is all of this a good thing? For sure, there are subscribers who will say no, as independent guides in The Florida Keys are quintessential Americans who make their own way, bowing to no one. Indeed, some guides in The Keys are among the best guides in the world. They have a

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deserved client following and they will survive this withering review, as well as anything new-fangled maver-

icks like Gordon Baggett can come up with. On the other hand, there are all those screamers in The Keys mas-

querading as guides. Watch it, fellows – something new is gaining on you in The Keys!

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 we publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received and exert no 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 have found one inside this issue of your newsletter. Alternately, you can file a report online by going to our website, www.anglingreport.com. Click on File A Report. For details on how to order printouts of Angler Network Reports, see page 2 of this issue.)

■ If you are looking for quality trout fishing next winter and don't want to travel all the way to Argentina or Chile, consider following in the footsteps of subscriber George Fielding who spent two bluebird days targeting abundant browns and rainbows in the "Miracle Mile" of the East Walker River in **California** near Lake Tahoe this past February. Fielding fished with guide Peter Stantley (\$350/day for two anglers), booked through Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters (www.tahoe-fly-fishing.com).

"In two days, two of us caught about 40 fish, mainly 15 to 18 inches. Three were over 20 inches. All were taken while wading; or, more correctly, while standing on the edge of the small river," says Fielding.

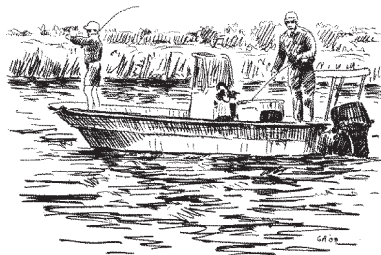
He gives Peter Stantley excellent ratings across the board and has good things to say about the stream. "This small, high-mountain river was simply beautiful. It's in interesting country. And Peter, our guide, is a great guy. He knew the water like the back of his hand, and he quickly put us on fish. We fished mainly in deep holes rather than riffles. Midges hatched all day, with baetis at lunch time."

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■ "If you want an A-plus luxury lodge with excellent guides, first-class equipment, gourmet food cooked by an A-plus Vietnamese cook, plus after-fishing amenities such as a pool table, a shotgun shooting course, tennis courts and a swimming pool, there is no other place on the Gulf of Mexico comparable to Redfish Lodge on Copano Bay near Rockport, **Texas**."

So says subscriber Curtis L. Frisbie, Jr., who self-booked a trip to Redfish Lodge this past November.

"The lodge is set on a secluded and protected mile-long peninsula at the tip of Rattlesnake Point, 10 miles west of Rockport," Frisbie continues. "My personal guide was lodge manager Brian Holden. He really knows the surrounding bays and the best places to fish. Using live shad for bait on spinning tackle, we limited out daily on slot-sized sea trout and redfish. We also caught more than our



fair share of sheepshead and one flounder. Other boats caught flounder, a small ray and a red snapper. It is even possible to catch a shark or two here. I got a deep line cut on my right index finger from casting so much, which tells you how good and consistent the fishing was."

According to Frisbie, all boats used at the lodge are shallow-draft 21- to 24-footers. Lunch is provided in the boats, and a typical day is five to eight hours on the water. Returning to the lodge does not mean that you have to quit fishing either, he says.

"There is a beach on one side with four sets of stadium lights for those who want to fish from shore or wade out. On the other side of the lodge is a 500-foot lighted pier with underwater green lights. I'd recommend this A-plus lodge and these A-plus people to anyone. You cannot get a better redfish and sea trout fishing trip. They can be reached at 800-392-9324; or www.redfishlodge.com."

(Postscript: In case you are wondering, the Redfish Lodge web site says they do accommodate fly fishermen with fly-specific guides and boats. The lodge does encourage catch and release. As for pricing, a two-day guided fishing package is \$1,110 per person, double occupancy. Not included in the price is liquor, cellar wines, fishing licenses and tips.)

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■ Subscriber George Fraise gives the venerable Mangrove Cay Club (www.mangrovecayclub.com) on Andros Island in the **Bahamas** a thumbs-up after fishing there this past November. He says he caught six to 10 bonefish per day, most of them weighing between three and six pounds. He also reports that he had regular shots at many larger bones, including a few that might crowd 10 pounds.

"The guides at Mangrove are the best I have fished with in the Bahamas," he writes. "They clearly love what they do, and they have an intimate knowledge of the fishery." He goes on to single out Leslie, one of the guides, for his great sense of humor and his fly casting skill. "How many people do you know who can

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cast an entire fly line without a rod?" he asks. "Or cast an entire fly line with one hand behind his back? Leslie can delicately drop a fly 40 feet away, or shoot it 100 feet with either hand in any direction, even into a 15 mph wind. To say we were impressed is an understatement."

Fraise goes on to give the rooms and the food at Mangrove Cay an enthusiastic nod. "Ike, the lodge chef, adds a gourmet element rarely found in true fishing lodges," Fraise writes. "Grilled lobster, grouper on a bed of risotto, perfectly cooked lamb chops - these were but a few of the wonderfully-presented dishes we savored on our stay. This was by far one of the best lodges I have ever stayed at."

(*Postscript:* Fraise didn't give the cost of his trip, so at press time we talked to Joe Linscott at Frontiers (800-245-1950), the company Fraise booked his trip through. Linscott says a seven-night/six-day stay at Mangrove Cay currently costs \$4,400; a three-night/two-day stay is \$2,000. Frontiers, by the way, holds exclusive booking rights to Mangrove Cay, which is still owned in part by Shackleton International Ltd., a company Frontiers merged with in 2003. A previously announced sale of the Mangrove Cay Club to Everlands (www.everlandslife.com) has apparently fallen by the wayside, at least temporarily, due to economic conditions. We called Everlands for comment, but no one had returned our call as this issue went to press.)

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■ And finally, in the January issue, you may recall, we published six positive reports on the fishing at Salmon Hole Lodge (902-835-8872; www.salmonholelodge.com) on the isolated Lapoile River in **Newfoundland**. Well, subscriber Thomas Schwendler has just made that seven positive reports in a row. "Best salmon fishing I've ever experienced!" he writes, noting he caught 15 salmon in five days of fishing. "They were amazing fighters! They were right out of the ocean!"

Like the other subscribers who weighed in on this lodge, Schwendler drove from his home (in his case in New Hampshire) to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, and took the overnight Marine Atlantic Ferry to Port au Basques, Newfoundland. The ferry was delayed, but he says the outfitter and his guide got him on the river so quickly he feels he lost very little fishing time.

Schwendler echoes the other subscribers in his positive assessment of the fishing, the scenery, the abundant wildlife (caribou and moose), the really good food and the absence of other people at Salmon Hole Lodge.



"The guides were just fantastic in every way. I didn't want to leave when my week was over," he writes. He gives the cost of his six-day trip as \$2,000, including guide service, accommodations, meals, salmon and trout fishing licenses and boat transportation between the river and the closest road access.

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Controversy

• Subscriber John W. Harrison is not pleased with the way we handled his complaint about Dave Egdorf's Wilderness Camp on the Nushagak River in Alaska (See the February 2009 issue, pages 14-15). He sent us the following letter, which we are printing in its entirety, along with a follow-up rebuttal statement from The Fly Shop, agent for this trip. Any subsequent comment on this trip will be added to the file in our database but not aired in the newsletter, as we think the comments published to date provide a

complete airing of all the issues.

John Harrison writes: Reference your "Controversies" note in the February 2009 issue on our visit to Dave Egdorf's camp in Alaska. My note is on behalf of the other seven anglers in our party, to express our disappointment that *The Angling Report*:

- 1.) Did not even acknowledge receipt of our trip report.
- 2.) Did not publish it in its entirety in *The Angling Report*.
- 3.) Instead chose to publish an extract, together with a lengthier rebuttal by The Fly Shop and Dave Egdorf.

We were generous in our favorable comments about the Egdorf camp, but we were also anxious that fellow anglers should get a realistic view of what this camp offers, and therefore not be disappointed, or even misled, as some of us were. We believe leaving out so much of our report in your "Controversies" abstract, does not give a realistic picture of fishing at the camp and what to expect. In their brochure on the camp, The Fly Shop refers to "ridiculous numbers of hookups as the order of the day," yet one of the most experienced members of our group went three days without catching a single rainbow (he did catch dozens of grayling and dark-red coho!). We do not believe the poor fishing had anything to do with rain the previous week, as Egdorf says. Rather, we believe the poor fishing is due primarily to five jet boats running up and down the same stretches of water two or three times a day, which is driving the trout further and further from the camp. Indeed, the further we went from the camp (45 to 55 minutes some days) the better were our chances of catching a rainbow. (We have witnessed exactly this same behavior on a river in Chile.) Furthermore (as we said in our report), only one of the four guides had been trained and was qualified to take guests into the more productive tributaries far from the camp. As for the "almost every day sighting of bears, moose, caribou, wolves, etc.," the only animals our

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party saw during the whole trip were a few eagles and a moose which Edgorf's daughter promptly shot the next day. Three bears which smelled the cut-up moose meat laid out on a tarp in the camp were scared off during the night with volleys of shotgun blasts! In short, we were very disappointed in the reality of this camp versus what we had been led to ex-

pect. We believe a fuller version of our report would have given potential fishermen a more realistic picture of what to expect, rather than the "Controversies" article that was published.

— *Dr. John W Harrison.*

Pat Pendergast of The Fly Shop writes: Thank you for the chance to re-address John Harrison's re-submitted report on Edgorf's Nushagak

Camps. My rebuttal will address only those issues that John re-addresses. The waters accessed by the guides at Edgorf's are not hammered or crowded. The lodge has near-exclusive use of over 40 miles of the Nushagak River below the lodge, 20 miles above the lodge and an additional 20-plus miles of smaller tributary water. All together they have

More Fishing Reports

(Editor Note: We don't usually devote a lot of space in The Angling Report to blue-water fishing whether with fly or conventional tackle simply because most of you are more focused on other types of fishing. But, over the past few months, we have received a number of subscriber reports on a variety of blue-water opportunities, some of them near spouse-pleasing getaway destinations, and we are excerpting them here. All of these reports have been added to our files and copies of them can be obtained through our Trip-Planning Service. See page 2 for details on how to place an order. Online Extra subscribers can view the full text of these reports free on our web site at www.anglingreport.com/online_extra/index.cfm.)

Australia: Subscriber Bruce Pfund has filed a lengthy and very detailed report on seven days of fishing for dogtooth tuna on conventional tackle, giant trevally on a fly rod and numerous other species along Australia's Great Barrier Reef with Captain Barry Cross aboard the 65-foot MV Joe Joe (011-614-1778-7797; www.mvjoejoe.com). He says he booked the trip through Laurie Wright at Australian Fishing Expeditions (Tel. 011-617-4095-2260; www.australianfishingexpeditions.com). Pfund says she got the timing of his trip just right to catch the species he was interested in. He says the trip was expensive, but the fishing was "spectacular, remarkable — pick your superlative." He notes that his wife gave the entire experience an A+ rating.

Guatemala: We have received three reports recently on blue-water opportunities in Guatemala. The first is from Charles ("Punch") Martyn, who gets right to the point in his report on three days of fishing for sailfish, blue marlin and dorado with Captain Brad Phillipps of Guatemala Billfish Adventures (512-

535-1751; www.guatbilladv.com): "Day 1 = 16 sails, plus one blue marlin; Day 2 = 36 sails; Day 3 = 19 sails and missed a blue. There were zero, none, nada problems on this trip. Brad and Cindy Phillips have a great, focused program which really is a cut above the other billfish venues I have visited." He gives the cost of his trip as about \$3,000 per couple for three days of fishing, four night's lodging.

- The second report is from peripatetic *Angling Report* subscriber Brian Griffith, who recently took his son on a billfish trip to Sailfish Bay Lodge (800-638-7405; www.sailfishbay.com) near Iztapa. "The action never stopped," he writes. "I could not imagine raising more than 100 sails in three days of fishing. My son and I landed 59 sails plus two mahis and an albacore. On conventional tackle we had 12 doubles and a triple. On fly rods we landed eight sails. The lodge itself was superb, with excellent food and all the amenities we needed. The staff was friendly and helpful. The fishing could not have been better." Griffith gives particularly high marks to the way Sportfishing Worldwide, the booking arm of Sailfish Bay Lodge (800-638-7405; www.sfww.com), handled all of the pre-trip details. He gives the cost of his trip, including a side excursion to Tikal, as \$7,500.

- The third report is from subscriber Darius Petrauskas, who traveled all the way from Lithuania to fish with Buena Vista Sportfishing (866-699-3277; www.buenavistasportfishing.com), also near Iztapa. He gives particularly high marks to Capt. Jody Elswick: "Jody and his beautiful wife Suzie are what we appreciated the most and will long remember from this trip," he writes. "These happy, attentive, always smiling

people made our trip a success even before we started fishing!" Petrauskas also notes that the fishing was spectacular, with 23 sailfish landed out of 29 hooked and 33 raised on the first day. A similar number was raised on the second day. "Wonderful lodge, fantastic food, excellent staff. I am glad I found this not so widely advertised operation," Petrauskas concludes. He gives the cost of his trip as \$1,795 US per person/ double occupancy for the three-night/two day fishing package.

Mexico: Subscriber Paul Oldaker, who has filed numerous reports on blue water fishing over the years, has checked in on two days of fishing with Danny and Alonso Orsuna of Marla's Sportfishing (www.marlasportfishing.com) which operates three boats out of Cruz de Huanacastle on Banderas Bay near the vacation hotspot of Puerto Vallarta. The highlight of the trip, according to Oldaker, was catching a 350-pound black marlin, but he also reports catching two 90-pound sailfish and a 60-pound yellowfin tuna, plus roosterfish and dorado. "This is a great place with great fishing," says Oldaker, noting that Puerto Vallarta offers many attractions for a non-fishing companion. He gives the cost as \$850/day.

- Over in Cabo San Lucas, subscriber James Duke has nothing but good things to say about a challenging day of fishing with Baja Anglers (619-270-1124; www.baja-anglers.com). According to Duke, fish were present in large numbers, including roosterfish chasing bait balls, but few were willing to take. He did land a 28-pound dorado, a ladyfish and two jacks. "The guides worked hard, and I would definitely fish with them again," he concludes.

well over a hundred miles of river to fish between six and eight anglers. I can say with complete certainty, through personal experience as an Alaska fishing guide and as someone who has fished and guided all over the world for 20-plus years, that four to five jet boats running 100 miles of river will have NO impact on the fishing. I believe the reason for the group's slow fishing (at times) can be specifically attributed to the substantial rainfall the region experienced the week before and the significant drop in water temperature as Dave

Egdorf details in his report. Dave Egdorf has 20-plus years experience fishing the Nushagak, and I respect his knowledge and subsequent analysis of the fishing. Other factors to consider are individual angler abilities, barometric pressure drop and rise, as well as the uncertainty of fishing in general – fishing is not always catching. On the Nushagak, it's almost an everyday occurrence to see bears, moose, caribou and bald eagles, wolves (even wolverines!) right from the camps – extremely elusive animals, and testament to the

sheer remoteness of the camp's location. Perhaps the low wildlife sightings were a result of the seasonal change (summer to fall), which in my experience disrupts the cyclic patterns animals follow. I just don't know.... We are deeply upset that the trip did not meet the expectations of John's group. Hundreds of anglers have enjoyed the hospitality and wilderness fishing at Egdorf's Nushagak Camps for close to two decades. References and testimonials from these anglers are available for all *Angling Report* subscribers. – *Pat Pendergast.*

□ And Finally....

A “Spotlight Report” On Arctic Char

By Tim Jones

(Editor Note: Look carefully at back issues of The Angling Report and you'll see that a few species of fish get most of the attention from world-traveling anglers. Bonefish, tarpon, permit, redfish, browns, rainbows, steelhead, Atlantic salmon, silver salmon — these are the fish that deservedly get a lot of the ink in our publication. But beyond these exalted few are dozens of other worthy fly rod species that are largely overlooked except as targets of opportunity on trips focused on other species. Managing Editor Tim Jones has decided we should take an occasional look at some of these forgotten fish in a series of “Spotlight Reports.” He gets the ball rolling this month with a personal favorite of his: Arctic char. If you have a favorite off-the-radar species that you think deserves a closer look, drop a note to Tim at: The Angling Report, 9200 S. Dadeland Blvd, Suite 523, Miami, FL, 33156-2713. E-mail: timjones@anglingreport.com.)

■ Char (genus *Salvelinus*) are very personal for me. The first fish I ever caught on a dry fly (#14 Royal Coachman) was a brilliantly colored six-inch wild brookie (*S. fontinalis*). More than 50 years later, I'm still pondering the question of who hooked whom in that encounter. The biggest fish I've ever hooked (not landed) in fresh water was another member of the char family, *S. namaycush*, a behemoth lake trout in the 50-pound range. I saw the fish clearly at a distance of less than 20

feet after hooking it in the Payne River in northern Quebec. It subsequently spooled me on a 7-weight rod and popped a 12-pound tippet with no apparent effort on its part.

Elsewhere, I've ignored huge rainbow trout to try (unsuccessfully) to catch a large khundza (*S. leucomanison*) in the Tigil River on Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, and I've dapped flies for rare landlocked



char in Lough Inagh in Ireland. Over the years, I've broken only two graphite flyrods on fish in my long fishing career, both on Arctic char, (*S. alpinus*) in northern Quebec.

Not only are char in general and Arctic char in particular among the strongest fish I have ever tangled with and, in my eyes at least, the most beautiful, they also live in some of the most isolated and scenic locations

the world has to offer. If you haven't made a trip specifically for Arctic char or its almost indistinguishable cousin, the sea-run Dolly Varden (*S. malma*), I'd strongly suggest you add it to your “bucket list.”

Arctic char are a circumpolar species, with most populations found roughly in latitudes from 40°N to as far north as 81° 50'N in Hazen Lake on Ellesmere Island. They have the distinction of being the northernmost freshwater fish species. Like other members of the char family, Arctic char can be either completely landlocked, living and spawning entirely in fresh water, or anadromous, living at sea and spawning in fresh water. Sometimes, the two lifestyles coexist in a single watershed. Not surprisingly, the anadromous fish often grow larger and attract more attention from traveling anglers.

While there are char populations in lakes in Switzerland, for example, and some in Scandinavia, Ireland, Scotland (check out www.charr.org for lots of fascinating information on Irish char) and even, apparently, in Maine (where they are probably confused with brook trout as they sometimes are in Labrador), no one goes specifically looking for them in any of these places. A better place to seek

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your first taste of char fishing might be Iceland, Newfoundland or Labrador, where they have a lot of char, but also Atlantic salmon and/or trout (browns in Iceland, brookies in Newfoundland and Labrador).

Up in Iceland, Arni Baldursson of Club Lax-a (011-354-557-6100; www.lax-a.is) has a local-boy's grasp on the char/trout opportunities. Prices have been falling in Iceland since the economic meltdown, and when they stop artificially propping up the Krona against foreign currencies and allow it to free-float, prices are likely to plunge even farther.

You can find a whole list of outfitters offering char opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador by going to www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/Fishing/Species.aspx and selecting char under the species listing. I'm not sure that they all actually offer a viable char fishery. Some of the names you'll get, such as Cooper's (877-266-7377; www.minipicamps.com) don't mention char on their websites, though Cooper's Minipi has landlocked char that average around six pounds, caught mainly early and late in the season. Among those outfits that do focus more intently on Arctic char are Flowers River (877-725-6664; www.flowersriver.com), Labrador Adventures (www.labradoradventures.com; 709-933-3750) and Portland Creek Outfitters (www.portlandcreekoutfitter.ca; 709-898-2328) in Labrador; and Tuckamore Lodge (709-865-6361; www.tuckamorelodge.com) and Eureka Outdoors (709-638-8098; www.eurekaoutdoors.nf.ca) in Newfoundland.

I've never fished for char in Newfoundland, but I have fished specifically for them in Labrador as part of a combined fishing trip/caribou hunt at Umiakovik Lodge run by Northern Labrador Outfitters (888-244-7824; www.bigstag.com). On that trip we also fished further north at a place called Saglek Fiord, where the camp was carried out to sea some years ago by an avalanche. The char at Umiakovik were abundant, aggressive

but rather small. I didn't see any fish over four or five pounds, but these smaller fish were fun on a 5-weight. Harvey Calden who runs Umiakovik, may still be able to get you into the char at Saglek where the fish run quite a bit bigger.

The real hotbeds of targeted char fishing are Greenland, northern Quebec, Nunavut, and Alaska. For Greenland, the go-to guy is Arni Baldursson of Club Lax-a, mentioned above, who books and manages a char fishing and caribou hunting operation with outpost camps near Isortoq on the southern coast. Arni describes this as a high-volume fishery for char up to five pounds with the occasional larger fish. He recommends the trip for adventuresome and fit anglers



only, which means it's likely to be pretty rugged. This one's definitely on my own "bucket list".

In northern Quebec, I can highly recommend the Payne River Camp run by Arctic Adventures (800-465-9474; www.arcticadventures.ca). I enjoyed one of the three best fishing days of my life there. I wrote a report on it for *The Angling Report*. Online Extra subscribers can access it free by going to the Online Extra section of our web site. It's Article ID: 639. Those who haven't upgraded to Online Extra can order the report by following instructions on page 2. I just talked to people who fished Payne River Camp in 2008, and the fishing they described was as good as ever.

Possibly the most exclusive Arctic char fishing trip in the world is on the Ekaluk River, which is reached

via float plane from Ikaluktutiak (Cambridge Bay) in the native territory of Nunavut. The outfitter, B & J Flyfishing Adventures (403-247-2374; www.arcticflyfishing.com), runs this camp only two weeks a year for only 12 anglers per week. A couple of my trusted sources describe this fishery in positively euphoric terms: big water, lots of big fish. Another one for my "bucket list."

Just to the northeast of Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island is High Arctic Lodge (www.higharctic.com; Tel. 800-661-3880), another char-specific operation which got rave reviews (see Article ID: 1703) from one of our Honor Roll Subscribers, Jerry L. Heiman. A little farther west and south, Bathurst Inlet Lodge (867-873-2595; www.bathurstarctic.com) is another outfit that offers char fishing. But perhaps the most famous of all char operations is the Tree River Lodge run by Plummers (800-665-0240; www.plummerslodges.com). The Tree River produced the world record char, an almost-unimaginable 32 pounds....

Moving on to Alaska, the arctic char situation gets a bit murky since new research is showing that many fish once considered Arctic char are actually Dolly Varden, or vice versa. I asked subscriber Kurt Iverson who lives and works in Alaska to help sort out the situation. Here's what he had to say:

"In Alaska, the distinction between Arctic char (*S. alpinus*) and Dolly Varden (*S. malma*) has always been confusing, as these species co-exist across the same geographical range. Arctic char in Alaska are found exclusively in fresh water, mainly in large lakes in and around the Bristol Bay region, farther north to the Brooks Range and on the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island. They are long-lived, and often grow to considerable size, with fish over 10 pounds a trophy. The best Arctic char lakes also have salmon populations and abundant juvenile salmon to augment the char diet. In these systems, the

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best char fishing often occurs in the spring and early summer when char move into the shallows to prey on migrating salmon smolts.

“Dolly Vardens in Alaska have evolved into northern and southern forms, with the distinction between the two largely confined to their genetic background. Some Dolly Varden populations are anadromous; others spend their entire lives in fresh water. Dollies are found primarily in the coastal regions, from Southeast Alaska all the way across the top of the state to the Mackenzie River drainage in the Yukon Territories. A typical Dolly in Alaska runs from one to three pounds, with five-pound fish considered trophies.

“For reasons not completely un-

derstood, anadromous Dollies in certain tributaries of Northwest Alaska live exceptionally long, travel long distances at sea and grow to enormous size. The current Alaska state record (27 pounds 6 ounces came from this region, and anglers explore the Noatak, Kivalina, Wulik, Kelly and Kugururok in search of these huge char. Infrastructure is sparse, however, and much of the fishing is do-it-yourself float trips where outfitters rent equipment and fly anglers into headwaters. The only lodge-based operation is Phil Driver’s Midnight Sun Adventures (907-644-4524) on the Wulik River with daily fly-outs. (See Report ID: 3489).

“To anglers, the seemingly insignificant differences between Arctic

char and Dolly Varden may be nothing more than an academic ‘whatever.’ They are extraordinary fish, however: hard-fighting, almost indescribably beautiful, and they are found in some of the most pristine environments on the planet. If you are interested in taxonomy, I’d suggest Robert Behnke’s fine book, *Trout and Salmon of North America*.”

If you’re thinking of char fishing in Alaska, you have lots of options. We have 38 subscriber reports in our database which mention Arctic char and 81 that mention Dolly Varden to help you out. In addition to a number of self-guided and guided float trips, there are several fly-out, lodge-based outfits mentioned more than once. Enjoy! – *Tim Jones*.

Back of the Book

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