



# THE ANGLING REPORT

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January 2009 Vol. 22, No. 1

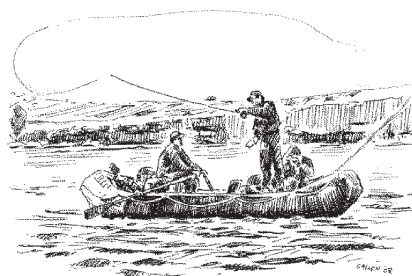
**DATELINE: ARGENTINA**

**FREE Fishing Report  
An On-Site Report On  
The Juramento River**

*(Editor Note: When we offered Online Extra subscriber Bob Tyrrell the chance to go fishing FREE on the Juramento River in northwest Argentina, his assignment was pretty straightforward – namely, get to the bottom of all the talk about this river being the next great place to take golden dorado. Does this smallish tailwater indeed offer heart-stopping action on big fish? Or is the river, as critics maintain, so temperamental it will never emerge as a major fishery? Well, read on and find out what Tyrrell experienced there, thanks to the generous offer of a company called Andes Outfitters, which also took him fishing farther south around Bariloche where it is building a new lodge. See box on page 6 for more information on our FREE Fishing Program. Enjoy!)*

**T**he South American fly fishing company, Andes Outfitters (786-266-5068; [www.andesoutfitters.com](http://www.andesoutfitters.com)), offers fly fishing trips for trout and golden dorado in Argentina. Thanks to *The Angling Report's* FREE Fishing program, I spent a week this past November sam-

pling both fishing experiences. As a native British Columbian, I've fished trout for more years than I care to admit to, but golden dorado would be a new and, I hoped, exciting adventure. Andes Outfitters owner Martin Carranza suggested I start off with three days on the Juramento River near Salta fishing for golden dorado and then fly down to the area around



San Martin de los Andes in northern Patagonia to fish trout for the rest of the week. This sounded good to me.

I arrived in Buenos Aires late Friday afternoon after the long flight via Vancouver, Toronto, and Santiago, Chile. I checked into my hotel, got a late dinner and hit the rack early as I had a 7:00 am flight. After that two-

hour flight Saturday morning I was met at the airport in Salta by Alex, Martin's manager for the dorado operation, and driven two hours south and east to his home in a small village near the river.

Andes Outfitters does not operate a lodge for the golden dorado fishery on the Juramento. Instead, I was put up in a small hotel in the town of J. V. Gonzalez, 20 minutes from Alex's home. The room was clean, quiet and perfectly adequate for my needs. Although no one I ran into in town spoke English and my Spanish is limited to not much more than *buenos dias* and *dos cervezas, por favor*, I found the people of Argentina unfailingly friendly and helpful. Essential communication always worked out. I took my meals in a restaurant just up the street (run by the family who owns the hotel), and the food was excellent. Argentina is, of course, known for its beef, and I have to say that I had one of the best steaks I've had in my life in that little restaurant.

But, back to the fishing. The Juramento, a tailwater born below El Tunal Dam in northwest Argentina, is a relatively small river (50 to 150 feet wide) compared to many dorado rivers in Argentina. Andes Outfitters is licensed to float the river from just below the dam for some 50 miles downstream. During my visit, the water was high and quite muddy (tea-colored) and the flow fast and steady. The river traverses a broad, relatively flat plateau region and the drop in elevation is steady but gradual; there were no rapids in the three sections I drifted.

Fishing is from 14-foot inflatable rafts with rowing frames and casting seats fore and aft. Anglers cast very large, brightly colored streamer flies (they reminded me of a cross between

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a classic Atlantic salmon fly and the bucktails we use for coho on the west coast) with eight to 10-weight rods and sink tip lines. Long casts are not required, typically 15 to 30 feet will do, but the key is to cast tight to the bank of the river - and I mean really tight. Dropping the fly within four inches of dry land usually got a "good cast" from Emiliano, my guide.

The drill is cast, make a quick upstream mend, followed by three or four long strips, then cast again. All well and good, except for the fact that the riverbank is lined with brush, logs and other debris, the raft is drifting at a good clip, and (more often than not) if you hook up with something other than a fish (i.e. branches, roots, logs), the current is often too strong for the guide to get the raft back upstream to save your fly. This isn't always the case; there are occasional back eddies that will save a fly. But you do have to budget for lost flies at \$5 apiece. At the end of my two and a half days of fishing I had 16 flies "on my account" but only brought one home (and I'm pretty sure Emiliano was being generous in his count).

On Saturday, we didn't get on the water until about 1 pm as the wind was really howling when we arrived at Alex's home. We drifted about 15 km that first day, getting off the water some time after 6 pm. On Sunday, we drifted a different stretch of about 30

km, and were on the river from about 9 am until 7:30 pm. Our final drift on Monday was another shorter one, perhaps 20 km, as I had to be off the water by 3 pm in order to have time to clean up, pack and make the two-hour drive back to Salta for an 8:15 pm flight to Buenos Aires.

So, how did I do? I had the best action on the first day and landed the first fish I hooked, a dorado of about six pounds. Though on the smaller side by Juramento standards, the fish ran hard, jumped six or eight times and came very reluctantly to shore to have his picture taken. I was pumped! This is not so hard, I thought! Guess again, buster! About an hour later I hooked a big fish, 15 pounds or so by Emiliano's estimate. He was out of the water five or six times in the 60 seconds I had him on and was 60 or 70 yards downstream when he exploded from the water and spit the hook. That was a serious adrenaline rush. Violent is the only word that comes to mind to describe a dorado hitting your fly. I hooked and very quickly lost one more large fish that first day.

Unfortunately, things didn't get any better than that. Day two was tough for me. I had a couple of strikes but no hookups at all. The second angler in the raft that day landed a six-pound fish during the last hour of our drift. On day three, I hooked and

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Fishing. If you have been on an interesting trip recently, send in a letter-length report and see if you can get on our Subscriber Honor Roll. Send it via e-mail to: doncausey@msn.com. Our newest Honor Roll Subscribers are **Kim and David Frances** whose report on a self-planned trip to Cat Island in the Bahamas is described elsewhere in this issue. You can find the complete list of our Honor Roll subscribers on our web site at: [www.anglingreport.com](http://www.anglingreport.com). Click on Honor Roll Subscribers.



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quickly lost another big fish and had another good strike.

Was I satisfied with the fishing? Definitely. I'd have been happier had I landed one of the big fish I hooked but, in fact, I did as well as anyone else we crossed paths with during my time there. (The river was uncrowded, by the way. Over a three-day period, we saw only three or four other boats that were fly fishing, plus a few locals fishing from the banks with gear.) According to Alex and Emiliano, this past season has been a little bit more unpredictable than previous ones. They've had very good days/weeks and then they've had slow periods.

It looks to me like dorado fishing is a lot like going after steelhead or

Atlantic salmon. You put your time in and there's always the possibility of a "fish-of-a-lifetime." But the fishing isn't easy. (Would we do it if it was?) Given the size and topography (debris, etc.) of the Juramento River, I'd say the odds are definitely with the fish, especially the big ones.

One caveat I would offer is that the prospective Juramento River angler needs to be in reasonably good physical shape, especially as regards the upper body. I work out three to four times a week and am fairly fit for my age, but by the time I left Salta I felt like my right arm was going to fall off. Casting large flies on a heavy rod close to a thousand times a day will do that to you.

Overall, dorado fishing is intense

and exciting. I have no difficulty at all imaging the thrill of fighting and landing a large fish in the relatively small waters of the Juramento River. The tiny taste that I experienced convinced me of that. And the big fish are definitely there and catchable. I'll go back.

The golden dorado operation run by Andes Outfitters is excellent. Alex and his staff are friendly, efficient and accommodating. Emiliano, the guide I fished with, was first-rate, great on the oars and consistently offering good advice and lots of encouragement. As mentioned above, I found the food and accommodation perfectly adequate. I was very well treated start to finish.

After a very short night in Buenos

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## Our Tipping Survey Is Ready!

■ We have finally put the finishing touches on our Tipping Survey, known formally as our study of "Traveling Anglers' Attitudes Toward Tipping On Fishing Trips." Copies are ready for mailing, or e-mailing. In fact, copies are being e-mailed free as this is written to subscribers who have upgraded to Online Extra. To get your own copy free, simply send us an e-mail address and we'll shoot one out to you. Alternately, you can go to our web site, [www.anglingreport.com](http://www.anglingreport.com), and download a copy. Click on Tipping Survey. If you are not e-ready, drop us a line at: *The Angling Report*, 9200 South Dadeland Blvd., Suite 523, Miami, Florida 33156. Or give us a call at 800-272-5656. Enclose \$2.50 for postage and handling in the US; \$5 outside the US. These charges apply only to hard copies sent through the mail.

If you are a continuing subscriber you already know our survey has turned up some resentment on the part of anglers toward those lodges and guides that are posting, or articulating, ever-higher tipping minimums. The resentment is particularly strong among anglers outside the US

who are accustomed to lower tips than are customary in this country. Many traveling anglers, it seems, simply don't want to see their tipping right replaced by a blanket obligation to pay more than was advertised for a trip. Angling professionals who ignore this point do so at their own peril.



One of the really interesting things that emerged from the survey as the final numbers fell into place is the fact that most traveling anglers currently tip a moderate amount for most angling services. Only a minority of anglers are handing out those extravagant amounts you hear being discussed whenever traveling anglers get together. So, where did those extravagant amounts come from? There

is a clear implication here that guides and lodge owners have helped create tipping expectations that exceed what most anglers really want to pay. Most would prefer to see an increase in the cost of the trip itself.

To be sure, some anglers are indeed handing out large tips. On the flip side, some are handing out miniscule tips, too. The range of tips being paid for some services is mind-blowing. No doubt it is also unsettling to angling professionals. After all, how does one cope with a cash flow that varies from \$5 to \$4,400 for the same angling service. That is the range of tips traveling anglers say they have paid recently for five days of guide service on a sea-run brown trout river in Patagonia!

Ultimately, our tipping survey is not going to solve anyone's tipping "problem." Every angler will have to do that for himself. All our survey really does is tell you what a cross section of traveling anglers is currently handing out in the way of tips for a wide variety of angling services. Personally, I found the results helpful and reassuring. I hope you have the same reaction. — *Don Causey*.



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Aires, I flew to Bariloche in northern Patagonia early the next morning, arriving about 9:30 am. I was picked up and driven three hours north to Junin de los Andes, where I was met by my guide, Gustavo. Once I'd checked into the hotel, we grabbed a quick lunch, got my fishing license from the tourist office and headed for the Malleo River, a wade-only stream 15 minutes from town. We spent a lovely sunny afternoon catching 12- to 14-inch trout on both wet and dry flies with the spectacular Lanin volcano as a backdrop. Very pleasant indeed!

Over the following three days I drifted the Collon Cura and Chimehuin Rivers and fished Lake Tromen. All three fisheries were superb. In a ten-hour drift on the Collon Cura, I

don't believe there was a 15-minute stretch when I wasn't into fish, except when we stopped for lunch. I caught mostly rainbows in the 1½- to four-



pound range but also landed some nice browns, the largest about five pounds. On the rivers I had two rods set up, a three-weight with dry flies

(small caddis imitations) and a five-weight with streamers. Whenever we saw any surface action, we would bring out the dry setup. We ended up getting about half our fish on dry flies, which surprised me a little bit, given that it was still relatively early in the season, spring in Argentina.

Lake Tromen is a large lake at the foot of the volcano in Lanin National Park, right on the Chilean border. This is spectacular country with the 12,000-foot snowcapped peak of the volcano (long dormant) dominating most vistas. The lake is known for big fish, rainbows, browns and brookies, and lots of wind. On the day I was there, the fish weren't huge but the wind was. Nevertheless Gustavo managed to beat into the steadily build-

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## □ Close-Up: US West

### Understanding Major Hatches - Part I

By Bill Cenis

*(Editor Note: The dead of winter is a good time to bone up on the major western fly hatches, with an eye toward determining where you can enjoy the fishing they produce, what flies imitate them and who to call for guiding service. Correspondent Bill Cenis filed the report. Next month, Cenis says he will shed similar light on the salmonfly hatch. Stay tuned...)*

■ From now into early March is the heart of winter in the Rocky Mountain region. With the exception of those few hardy souls who accept the challenge of fishing in the cold and snow, many anglers use this downtime to tie flies and plan for the upcoming fishing season. I've found the best way to begin planning is to pinpoint the timing of key insect hatches.

In this column, I'll take a look at the first major hatch, the Skwala stonefly, which is probably your best bet for getting an early start on stream fishing in the West. Locals and a growing number of visitors target the Skwala hatch on Montana's Bitterroot and Clark Fork rivers as their fishing season's kickoff event.

The Skwalas do their thing in early spring, prior to run-off. The hatch usually begins in late February as winter fades and stream temperatures rise to a minimum of 45 degrees. Depending on weather, of course, eager anglers usually begin their assault the first week of March. The hatch peaks around the first two weeks of April. By May, the Skwala fishing is finished.

Like the larger and better known Salmonfly, the Skwala is a stonefly. The Skwala averages about one inch long, the body is usually dark brown or olive and some-

times black. Only the females have wings. When not in flight a Skwala's wings extend the length of the body.

Because the stonefly's life cycle passes through only two stages, the nymph stage and the adult stage, and because of their comparatively large size, stonefly hatches are simple to fish in comparison, for instance, to midges and mayflies. The stonefly's large size makes the imitations easy for the angler to follow on the water.

Over the years, local fly tiers have developed many Skwala imitations. Fly shops and guides can tell you what's working. Personally, I've found a floating size 10 or 12 green-bodied Stimulator works as well as anything. If you're into nymphing, a stonefly nymph or Hare's Ear fished just off the bottom works well. Some anglers go both ways, using a dry imitation on top in tandem with a nymph imitation beneath.

Despite the relatively large size of the Skwala, they are not showy emergers. You may not even see one while fishing, but they are there and the trout know it.

Typically, a fishing guide will float you about 20 to 30 yards off the shoreline and have you cast toward the riverbanks. Don't expect a 20-fish day; four or five trout is a good day. But the browns and rainbows will likely be in the 14- to 18-inch range - nice fish.

The Bitterroot is prime Skwala water for visiting anglers. Two of my sons live near the Bitterroot, and both have fishing rafts, so I've fished the Skwala hatch here many times. Access is easy. The east and west forks of the Bitterroot come together a few miles south of the town of

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ing breeze along a somewhat protected shoreline so that I could fish the drop off that varied from 10 to 50 yards from shore. Using the five-weight rod and a Teeny 300 line I landed 10 to 12 rainbows from three to 5½ pounds in less than two hours. Gustavo was a bit disappointed that we didn't get either browns or brookies, but I didn't mind. The 'bows were all quality hard-fighting fish with several serious aerialists in their number.

On Saturday morning, before I caught my midday flight back to Buenos Aires, Gustavo took me to see Andes Outfitters' new Chime Lodge, which was in the final stages of construction and scheduled to open in late December, 2008. The lodge is lo-

cated on the banks of the Upper Chimehuin River, near the famous "Boca del Chimehuin" where (according to Andes Outfitter's promo piece)



"countless giant trout were caught by people like Joe Brooks, Billy Pate, Ernest Schweibert, Mel Krieger, Bebe Anchorena, Prince Charles Radziwill,

Jake Jordan, and many more...." Set in a broad valley, 17 km from Junin de los Andes, the lodge offers great views of both the river and Lanin volcano. The accommodations look like they will be first-class.

This part of northern Patagonia seems to me to be pretty much a trout angler's paradise. The rivers and lakes are full of willing fish. The weather is excellent; yes, the wind blows, but it's manageable. The scenery is truly spectacular. And what struck me perhaps most of all is the fact that there are so few people. The rivers were definitely not being over fished when I was there. In fact, we fished virtually alone, all day, every day.

I would rate the Andes Outfitters operation here excellent. My guide,

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Darby to form the main river. Highway 90 parallels the "Root" for its entire length, about 70 miles, with many public access points along the way. The towns of Hamilton, Stevensville, Florence, and Lolo offer full services. The river feeds into the Clark Fork a couple miles west of Missoula.

Weather is critical in fishing the Skwala hatch. Late winter/early spring in Montana often brings quick changes of weather which can turn an otherwise uneventful float into, for lack of a better word, an adventure. When my son and I launched this past spring, for example, the weather was wonderful – no wind and not a cloud in the sky. Less than two hours into the float we had a staunch wind blowing into our faces and snowflakes plastered onto our clothing. Getting to our takeout required some strenuous rowing against the wind for over an hour. But before the squall hit we caught a few nice rainbows and a 16-inch brown, so the hardships were worth the hassle (easy for me to say, my son was rowing). The lesson here: Dress in layers and always be prepared for cold weather when fishing in the Rocky Mountain region in early spring.

Though the Bitterroot has become the most popular stream to fish this hatch, local anglers and guides know that the larger Clark Fork River also has a Skwala hatch. Spend a couple of days in the Missoula area and you can fish both streams. If the Skwala hatch doesn't produce, fishermen have another option: mayflies. Blue Wing Olives begin coming off as early as late February, with peak hatches in April and May. Hungry trout eagerly rise to the occasion after a winter of inactivity. This occurrence of bug-meets-fish is widespread, from small creeks to large rivers, in most western states. Two other spring hatches, the Pale Morning Dun (PMD) and Western March Brown

(WMB) provide similar options.

Mayfly hatches produce two fishable stages. First, the bottom-dwelling nymph (best imitated by a small, size 16-22, Pheasant Tail or Hare's Ear) swims to the surface. During this stage, watch for trout flashing near the river bottom, or tailing just under the surface for the emerging nymphs. This typically occurs mid-morning.

Stage two has the recently emerged mayfly, now known as a dun, fluttering above the stream or riverbank, or floating on the water as they lay their eggs. The Blue Wing Olive resembles a mini pup-tent while riding the waves downstream. You'll often see trout snouts breaking the surface as they feed. This dry-fly action normally takes place from mid-morning until late afternoon.

The adult Blue Wing Olives, Pale Morning Duns and Western March Browns are small, measuring three-quarters of an inch or less. Small flies and light tippets (6x) are in order. A drag-free drift is essential. These spring mayfly hatches don't draw hordes of fishermen to western rivers and streams. But they can be a productive backup when the larger stoneflies fail.

Now is the time to make arrangements to fish the Skwala hatch. Here are a few guide services in Missoula and Bitterroot Valley: In Florence, try River Otter Flyshop & Outfitters (866-800-4858; [www.riverotterflyfishing.com](http://www.riverotterflyfishing.com)). In Hamilton, The Flyfishing Center (406-363-3801; [www.montanaflyfishingcenter.com](http://www.montanaflyfishingcenter.com)). Missoula has The Kingfisher, (888-542-4911; [www.kingfisherflyshop.com](http://www.kingfisherflyshop.com)) and Grizzly Hackle, (800-297-8996; [www.grizzlyhackle.com](http://www.grizzlyhackle.com))

In next month's column, I'll take a look at the West's biggest angling event, the salmonfly hatch, plus a few other key hatches that take place in summer and fall. Enjoy! – *Bill Cenis*.

Gustavo, was a terrific oarsman and a passionate guide who obviously loves what he's doing. There was quite simply nothing negative to say about my stay in Junin. The accommodations and food were excellent. The people I crossed paths with were all friendly and helpful. What's not to like? Overall I had a hell of a good time and I can't wait to go back. I'd like to thank both *The Angling Report* and Andes Outfitters for giving me this wonderful opportunity to explore another great fly fishing experience. - Bob Tyrrell.

## DATELINE: LOUISIANA

### Honor Roll Report The "Real Skinny" On Three Redfish Guides

*(Editor Note: If subscriber Bob Dahlberg weren't already on our Subscriber Honor Roll, we'd sure put him there for this "warts-and-all" report on three Louisiana redfish guides. Dahlberg's report underscores the importance of our efforts to get subscriber feedback on trips. After all, who knows better what is important to traveling anglers than a fellow traveling angler?)*

*Thanks, Bob, for the report. See Page 2 for more on our Honor Roll Program.)*

**W**hen I read Lefty Kreh's "Louisiana Redfishing Field Note" in the January, 2008 *Angling Report*, I knew I had to give this fishery a try. Who could resist what The Master called "...the best redfishing I've seen anywhere." Multiple shots a day at unsophisticated fish weighing over 20 pounds! 20- to 30-fish days! All right here in the US!

In February 2008, my fishing partner and I booked three guides: Gregg Arnold who lives in New Orleans and fishes out of Hopedale; Gary Taylor who usually fishes the Lake Borgne area out of Slidell; and Blaine Townsend who fishes out of Chauvin. Prime time for a redfish trip to Louisiana is mid-November to mid-January. Gregg Arnold told me that ideal conditions are "new moon and falling tide." Those constraints combined with holiday madness meant we wound up picking early November 2008 as the date of our trip.

Before we get to the individual guides and lodging, I'd like to give you some general notes on the fishery. Sight casting for Louisiana redfish is technically easy. Casts are usually less than 20 feet. Because casts are short and you often get multiple shots at a fish, I would recommend a redfish trip to newcomers to saltwater fishing, especially in preparation for your first bonefish trip.

The Louisiana marshes are too soft to wade, so fishing is done exclusively from a boat. All three of the guides I fished with use Hell's Bay flat boats, with tunnels. The boats are less than 18 feet long, so only one angler can cast at a time.

We used 8- and 9-weight rods with floating lines. Redfish are not leader-shy; we fished with 20-pound-test or greater (except with Gregg Arnold, who uses 12-pound-test for record-setting purposes).

The fish were not fussy about fly

### 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 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 and Christmas Island. The total 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 up-

grade 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.

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*(Postscript: Online Extra subscribers now also get invited to review top-quality fishing tackle and then keep it. See our web site for details.)*



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patterns. Each of our guides had a personal favorite fly: Gary Taylor relies on a brown shrimp attractor; Gregg Arnold likes a purple crab attractor; and Blaine Townsend is partial to an orange/white Clouser. Presentation is more important than the fly you use. You have to make your fly pass within a foot in front of a fish. But if you don't, redfish in Louisiana are forgiving. My friend and I often got second and third casts on our trip.

Most fish in Louisiana are sighted off points or other structure as singles or pairs, and they are easy to see. In some respects, this is like a Montana float: You cast against a grassy bank while the guide poles the boat along the shoreline. Prime sighting and catching time is from 10 am to 2 pm when the sun is overhead. In the four days we fished, it was windy enough to muddy the water by the end of the day, which made it very difficult to sightfish.

All three guides we used were very professional. They all got us fish. I have no reservation in recommending any one of them. However, they each had different personalities and service levels. What follows is a description of the experience we had with each one. Perhaps it will help you pick the one that's right for you and your skill level.

Lefty Kreh, in his report, indicated he fished with Gary Taylor and Blaine Townsend, likely because they work together through Dulac Charters (985-563-2843; [www.gaidry.com/dulac/](http://www.gaidry.com/dulac/). E-mail: [ledet@basicips.net](mailto:ledet@basicips.net)). Dulac Charters is operated by Lance and Maggie Ledet who house their guests in a large mobile home resting on ten-foot pilings. Maggie does all the cooking, and prepares sandwiches and drinks for the day's outing. Gary Taylor (985-641-8532; [www.goforitcharters.com](http://www.goforitcharters.com). E-mail: [fishinla@bellsouth.net](mailto:fishinla@bellsouth.net)) is a hard-working, full-service guide. When we booked him in February, he was primarily fishing the Lake Borgne area out of Slidell. What attracted us to Taylor was that

he not only fishes a flats boat, but he also uses a larger boat to cross Lake Borgne and reach less fished areas. Unfortunately for us, Hurricanes Gustav and Ike tore up Taylor's big-fish territory this year. A few days before we arrived, he told us he was currently more familiar with the fishing around Dulac, so we fished with him there.

When we booked Taylor, we told him we were experienced bonefishers. He told us we'd have no trouble catching redfish, which put us at ease. Indeed, Taylor was tireless in getting us to fish, netted our fish and changed our flies. He's a patient, understanding guide who likes to share his love for fishing in the bayous.

The first day we fished with him, we went for quantity. We each caught



a half dozen redfish, a few black drum and a sea trout. The second day we went for larger fish, and we caught half that number. The largest fish we caught weighed eight pounds. Gary charged us \$500 per day for his services.

Day three, we fished with Blaine Townsend, who has a very direct personality. He tends to get right down to business on a charter. Townsend primarily fishes out of his own facility called "Sportsman's Paradise" (985-594-7772; [www.redfishflyfishing.com](http://www.redfishflyfishing.com). E-mail: [CandBcharters@bellsouth.net](mailto:CandBcharters@bellsouth.net)) near Chauvin, which is where he wanted us to fish.

It is worth noting that Townsend has had both knees replaced, so he sits on his raised platform as he poles the boat. Since his mobility is restricted, you need to net your own

fish and tie on the orange and white Clousers that he provides. Bring your own drinks and lunch, too, as Townsend does not provide them.

Despite his limitations, Townsend worked hard to get us to fish. We probably sighted as many as he did. The water was muddy, and I ended up blind casting around points and structure, and I caught a few that way. For the day, we wound up with about a dozen fish between us, with the largest weighing in at eight pounds. We had heard that Townsend doesn't fish past 2 pm, but we fished to 3 pm and by then the fish had stopped biting, so we were fine with quitting.

When we got back to the dock, Townsend (ever the businessman) headed straight to the bank to cash our \$500 check for the day's fishing while his wife, Connie, gave us a tour of the lodging options. In addition to guiding, The Sportsman's Paradise offers lodging and a restaurant. Hurricane Gustav had put the restaurant under six feet of water, and it was still closed during our visit in November.

Basic-Level rooms here run \$60 a night with three twin beds. They are located adjacent to the restaurant in a cinder-block building dating from the mid-1950's when Townsend's father built the place. The rooms are very clean, and they had been recently repainted. There's no TV in the rooms, however, and room lighting seemed pretty minimal. So, bring a head lamp if you plan to play cards or read in the room.

The "premier" lodging here is in a new mobile home placed on raised pilings about 50 yards from the restaurant. It can hold up to six people at \$200 per night. For some reason, Townsend's wife, Connie, did not tell us about the lodging and meals available at Dulac Charters. Instead, she told us that, with their restaurant out of commission, we'd have to buy our meals in Houma (45 minutes away). So we decided to stay in Houma, and drive to Dulac and Chauvin each morning.

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# THE ANGLING REPORT

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We stayed at the La Quinta hotel in Houma. In retrospect, I'd have stayed at Dulac Charters to avoid the 45-minute drive in the morning, as well as the afternoon traffic jams. If Dulac Charters has no vacancy, consider booking the Comfort Inn in Houma, which is 15 minutes closer to Chauvin or Dulac than the La Quinta.

For dinner in Houma, the local guides recommended Big Al's (stick to their steamed fish menu). We also tried Boudreau and Thibodeau's, which has a college-town restaurant atmosphere, Cajun-style. I had the fried alligator; yes, it tasted like flavorless chicken. Our waitress steered us clear of the pecan pie. A former local we met at our hotel recommended the 1921 Seafood and Oyster Bar. "Just don't let the outside appearance scare you off," we were told. My fishing partner and I agreed that 1921 had the best gumbo of the restaurants we tried. I enjoyed the fresh oysters and a seafood sampler called "The Trash Basket."

For our fourth day of fishing, we moved from Houma to New Orleans and our third guide, Gregg Arnold (504-237-6742; [www.fishinthelandofgiants.com](http://www.fishinthelandofgiants.com). E-mail: [garnold3@cox.net](mailto:garnold3@cox.net)). Arnold's helpful website has a good checklist on what to bring, a link to tide tables, preferred New Orleans hotels with discounts and an online calendar to view which days he has open.

Arnold picks his clients up in New Orleans at 5:30 am, then stops for coffee/breakfast/sandwich pick-up at Penny's Café in Violet, LA, before putting in at Hopedale. When he picked us up in the French Quarter, Arnold didn't say a word to us while he re-arranged the back of his pick up to make room for all our gear and luggage. 15 minutes later, we were into the Ninth Ward where he spoke up for the first time to point out a corner where pre-Katrina crack dealers did their business. Once Arnold had some coffee, he warmed up to us, and for the rest of the day was quite friendly.

Once on the water, Arnold ran the boat about 30 minutes before we started fishing. At that point, we were in skinny water, and we began to cast to sighted fish along the grass banks. Fishing with a guide who owns the domain name, "Fish in the Land of Giants," we were expecting big fish. Gregg told us that a client the day before had caught a 30-pound redfish, but that it was too rough for us to ride further out where the giants lurked. We had what was for us a typical day of fishing: about a dozen redfish averaging around five pounds, with the largest weighing about 8½ pounds.

Arnold encourages clients to use his gear, an 8-weight Scott rod with a 9-weight floating line. He wanted us to fish with 12-pound tippet for



record-setting purposes. For the most part, we tied on our own flies that he provided, and we landed our own fish. He was more openly frustrated than the other guides by our limited "in-the-clutch" casting ability, but he always apologized a few minutes later.

Arnold encouraged us to fish until 3 pm., but we ended our day at 2:30 to have plenty of time to get to the airport. The week before we arrived, we asked Arnold if he would take us to the airport. He replied by e-mail that he would do it. Once we got near New Orleans, however, he did not take the well-marked route to the airport; we assumed he was taking a local short cut. But we soon found ourselves in a residential district, and he pulled up in front of what turned out to be his home. He asked us at that point if it was okay if we ordered

a cab to the airport from there. What could we say? Despite renegeing on his promise to us, he and his wife were generous hosts. They let us use their shower, offered us food, including some of Arnold's very tasty birthday cake, and the Cacique Venezuelan rum he had raved about while we were fishing. We found out from Arnold's wife that they rent out three rooms to guests who fish more than one day. I am not sure what they charge for room and board. I do know that we paid \$550 for the fishing, and that the flat-rate taxi fare from town to the airport is \$30.

The essence of the Louisiana redfishing experience is remoteness. At most, we saw one or two other boats fishing for redfish. In the end, we didn't come close to duplicating Lefty Kreh's multiple shots at redfish over 20 pounds, and we caught only half the 20 to 30 redfish a day Lefty had caught. But it was fun to sight cast to six- to eight-pound fish that were forgiving enough to give us second and third chances. All the people we met showed us "good ole Southern hospitality."

All things considered, Louisiana redfishing is a terrific option to consider if you have a non-fishing spouse, because the wildlife is plentiful (blue crabs, oyster catchers, egrets, blue herons and pelicans), and it's close to urban dining and hotels. – *Bob Dahlberg.*

(Postscript: Dahlberg tells us he has posted photos from his trip at: [http://bobd2h.smugmug.com/gallery/6682165\\_dQJbw.](http://bobd2h.smugmug.com/gallery/6682165_dQJbw.))

## SPECIAL REPORT

### News Analysis

## Are Modern Pirates A Threat To Motherships?

*(Editor Note: All the reports about piracy off the coast of Africa have sparked concern that an angling mothership somewhere in the world may eventually fall victim. What actually happened recently to a Seychelles mothership has added fuel to the fire. Read on....)*



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# THE ANGLING REPORT

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It's a thankless task, but here at *The Angling Report* we believe it is our job to sound the alarm whenever we think a new danger has emerged. Actually, danger may be too strong a word for the subject of this report – namely, the mild risk that pirates, or ocean robbers, will attack a mothership one day.

No, we did not go digging for this report in the interest of creating a sensation. The story came to us in the form of an e-mail from Gerhard Laubscher, the Managing Director of Flycastaway (011-27-82-334-3448; [www.flycastaway.com](http://www.flycastaway.com)), a South African booking agency/outfitter that specializes in trips to Africa and environs, including Seychelles. Here is the text of that e-mail:

“We have recently received some calls from concerned clients, asking whether our new charter vessel has been hijacked by pirates in Seychelles. Obviously, this type of rumor can stir great anxiety and unease in people looking forward to their upcoming or possible trip with us to Cosmoledo or Providence in the next few months. We can assure you that these statements are simply incorrect, as there has been no attempt to hijack any vessel in Seychelles waters. Good news is that our new 150-foot vessel has arrived safely in Seychelles and is ready to start the season on the outer atolls! We hope this puts any feelings of insecurity to rest and we look forward to guiding you in Seychelles soon.”

Why would an outfitter issue a reassuring statement like this? Why even bring the subject up? Before contacting Laubscher, we did a bit of poking around and came up with the unsettling fact that Mogadishu, Somalia, is only 837 miles from Victoria, the capital of Seychelles. Some reports indicate that the recently hijacked Saudi oil tanker, *Sirius Star*, was captured closer to Seychelles than to Somalia. Hmmm...

We immediately got on the phone to Laubscher, who confirmed what we

already thought – namely, that there was some fire behind the smoke emanating from his e-mail. According to Laubscher, his company plans to use a brand-new, 150-foot mothership, the *MV Flycastaway*, to host anglers in Seychelles this season. The ship will hold a maximum of 12 anglers and four guides in seven en-suite cabins, he says. Each guide will have a purpose-built tender for fishing. All four tenders can be carried on the deck of the ship.

Now for the interesting part. The *MV Flycastaway* is a former research vessel, which was purchased and refitted in northern Europe. To get to Seychelles, it had to pass through the Suez Canal. As it sailed by the Gulf of Aden, it was chased by pirates, Laubscher says, going on to report



that the captain was able to outmaneuver them. Aiding him were nearby warships from both the Indian and French navies.

“To avoid further problems we rerouted the ship away from the African coast toward India, then south to Seychelles,” Laubscher says. “That cost us thousands in extra fuel and put us a week behind schedule. Worse than that, the fact that the boat was chased by pirates fueled a rumor that the boat had been captured. That rumor ran rampant in the South African fishing community which provides 20 to 30 percent of our clients. We felt we had to reassure everyone that the new ship had reached its destination safely.”

Laubscher says emphatically that there have been no incidents of piracy in Seychelles territorial waters. The

area his mothership will be operating in this season (December through April) is nine degrees south of the equator, he says, and far from the dangerous waters along the Somali coast. There is absolutely nothing for would-be clients to worry about.

Indeed, Laubscher appears to be on solid ground when he says there have been no incidents of outright piracy in Seychelles waters, though there were some scary incidents there recently. More on them in a moment. In our view, we think his e-mail – the one that caught our eye and inspired this report – would have been more effective if it had told the whole story instead of glossing it over by leaving out critical information.

As for those scary incidents in Seychelles, we dug them up on the web site of the International Chamber of Commerce's Commercial Crime Service ([www.icc-ccs.org](http://www.icc-ccs.org)), which lists incidents of piracy worldwide. Seems a yacht anchored off Mahe, Seychelles, was boarded by a lone robber recently. Several other boats were also attacked that same night. As a result, the piracy reporting centre “advises all vessels/yacht/boats to be cautious when visiting Mahe....”

Another web site we visited to flesh this story out, [www.yachtpiracy.org/en/index.htm](http://www.yachtpiracy.org/en/index.htm), has detailed maps and lists of yacht piracy incidents throughout the world. There are scores of incidents listed on the web site. The east coast of much of Central America is a hotspot for piracy. So is the mouth of the Amazon River, various Caribbean islands and the coast of Venezuela. Whether any of the incidents listed on this web site involved motherships is not clear, but it is unlikely a mothership has been targeted or we would have heard about it.

While searching the internet, we also discovered some recent reports of piracy in Papua, New Guinea, not so far from the home waters of Carpentaria Seafaris (011-61-7-40693254; [www.seafaris.com.au](http://www.seafaris.com.au)), a mothership operation on the York Peninsula of northern Australia. We printed a positive report on

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on Carpentaria in the December issue. We also found many incidents of piracy in Indonesian waters.

We asked Greg Bethune of Carpentaria Seafaris if piracy was a concern in his area. His reply: "Piracy is absolutely NOT an issue in Australian waters even though we are in a very remote area and very close to New Guinea. Australia is the safest place on the planet. There is no need for us to take special piracy precautions. We are extremely cautious in everything we do already. We have good satellite communications and can have rescue helicopters to our location in 50 minutes if we dial 000 which is your 911 equivalent."

Bethune concludes that everything is fine in his area. Indeed, it does appear he has taken all of the necessary

steps ahead of time if the unthinkable happens. Satellite communication is one key. Equally important, we feel, is a tendency on the part of a skipper to "war game" his situation in advance and create a realistic response plan. Given world conditions, this is the kind of attitude and behavior we would look for in a mothership operation anywhere in the world at the time of booking. The outfitter we would worry about is the one that laughs at the risk of piracy, or ocean robbery. Or the one who tries to convince you such worries are non-existent. They aren't. — *Tim Jones.*

*(Don Causey Note: Mothership operators may want to know that Global Rescue, the medical evacuation and rescue company we recommend, has maritime security experts available to*

train captains and crews headed into dangerous areas on how to deal with piracy threats. They can also place security personnel on board. In partnership with Johns Hopkins Medicine, Global Rescue provides the best telemedicine solutions in the world for injured and sick people at sea and, as part of their regular service, coordinates rescue and medical evacuation. Clients headed anywhere away from home may want to note this capability of Global Rescue. The company has emerged as the gold standard among medical evacuation companies. In my view, no one should go fishing away from home without coverage from this company. You can get more details on our web site, or directly from Global Rescue at: 617-459-4200; [www.globalrescue.com](http://www.globalrescue.com))

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## Briefly Noted

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

■ So, are those endless bonefish flats in **Cuba** finally going to be accessible to American anglers? With a new and very different administration about to take over in Washington, speculation to that effect is running rampant. Already, Obama has said he is going to lift controls on Cuban-American travel to Cuba and restore education-related travel. Can the lifting of the tourist flood gates be far behind? Maybe. Maybe not.

We don't pretend to have the Washington contacts that are necessary for this kind of reporting, but we did make a couple of calls last month to people who should know what they are talking about. The first of those was to a gentleman by the name of Wayne Smith, who hangs his hat at a think tank called Center For International Policy. Smith headed the US Interest Section in Havana from 1979 to 1982 and is widely viewed as one of the most senior Cuba-watchers in Washington. Our second call was to Anthony Boadle, who has spent the last six years as Havana Bureau Chief for Reuters.

The good news is, both of these observers think unrestricted travel to Cuba is just around the corner. Boadle thinks it will come more quickly than Smith does because he predicts that Congress is simply going to cut off funding for the Treasury Department's enforcement actions against Americans who spend money in Cuba. Indeed, Congress has that



authority and it could wield it fairly quickly.

Indeed, there are signs the tourist flood gates will be opened, but we remain skeptical. In the past, dating clear back to the Ford and Carter administrations and continuing through

the Clinton Administration, it has not been the US Government that has scuttled efforts to normalize relations with Cuba. It has been Fidel Castro's reluctance to give up his American scapegoat. Faced with potentially losing it, he has abruptly cracked down on dissidents and even shot down planes belonging to the Cuban American sea rescue group, Brothers To The Rescue. Boadle says he does not see a repeat of that kind of behavior this time. Raoul is a very different person than his brother, Boadle says, and he believes Raoul Castro will be calling the shots.

Again, in our view, maybe. Maybe not. The key person to watch in coming months, we think, is not Obama, or Raoul, but Fidel, who is rumored to be re-emerging as a decision-maker. We think he will weigh in on this matter. And, frankly, it will surprise us greatly if he gives up his American scapegoat and allows an unrestrained flow of American tourists. The American proponents of unlimited travel to Cuba have long pointed out that the Castro regime will lose control of Cu-

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ban society under such an onslaught. And that is our point: Fidel Castro knows that. And he is unlikely to allow it to happen.

If we are wrong, and we hope we are, the folks at Avalon Fishing Center ([www.avalons.net](http://www.avalons.net)) say they are ready for an invasion of American anglers. The company has a total of 38 Dolphin skiffs ready for action, plus several motherships. It controls mile after mile of protected and very lightly fished marine park in the Queens Garden Archipelago and Archipelago de los Canarreos. It currently caters to about 1,100 clients a year and has the capacity to expand. On top of all that, nearer to Havana, there is the Bay of Pigs fishery. The most active agent there is a company called Cuba Welcome:

([www.cuba.welcome.com](http://www.cuba.welcome.com)).

Stay tuned. We'll let you know if this cornucopia of new fishing opportunity finally becomes legally available to American anglers.

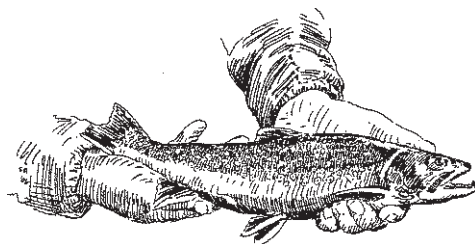
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■ So, what is the latest on that ash fall in the area of Lago Yelcho in Chile? Last May, you'll recall, we reported that ash fall from a volcanic eruption in that area was threatening fisheries in parts of Chile and Argentina. We're indebted to Honor Roll Subscriber Robert McMeekin for the following update. Thanks, Robert, for checking in: "When the Chaitén volcano erupted on May 2, 2008, sending a plume of toxic ash that destroyed the town of Chaitén and spread over Lago Yelcho and its tributaries, many of us who consider the Yelcho fishery the best in Chile (and one of the best in the world) were deeply concerned for its future. Well, I visited Lago Yelcho this past December with Gonzalo Cortés to see what effect the ash was having. I'm delighted to report that the fishing was good and, for now, the damage from the ash appears to be limited.

"We stayed at Gonzalo's Chucao Lodge (011-56-2-2018571; [www.Chucaolodge.cl/home.html](http://www.Chucaolodge.cl/home.html)) on the Yelcho and fished areas close to the

lodge where the Rio Yelcho begins, at the Bahía de Los Leones (a prime area well known to those who have fished Yelcho), and at one of the big eddies on the Rio Yelcho where trout cruise in sight just beneath the surface waiting for the river to bring in food. In all the places we fished the action was good to very good. The trout seemed strong and healthy, if a little on the thin side.

"The water was very high and we were there during an unseasonable hot spell, so conditions were not typical. All the reeds that are home to dragonflies – for which the trout leap clean out of the water – were under water and it was not easy to observe insect life. When you rubbed the bellies of trout you could feel the snails in their stomachs. This is important



because snails are normally the key component of the trout's diet during the winter when there are no flying insects and few nymphs.

"When we approached the lake from a distance, the water seemed to have a turquoise or aquamarine color not characteristic of the lake before the ash fall. From a boat the water was slightly turbid. We could clearly see the column of vapor rising from the volcano on the horizon.

"There were no other fishermen on the water and Gonzalo's Chucao Lodge/Yelcho seemed to be the only one open. The caretaker at the Bahía Los Leones Lodge said they were expecting clients on December 5.

"You need to be aware that access to Yelcho is difficult now. We flew to Coyhaique's Balmaceda airport and drove to Gonzalo's new lodge on

Lago Rosselot, called Chucao Lodge/Rosselot. The trip takes five hours from Coyhaique. It is not a long trip measured in kilometers but the going is very slow on a very difficult part of the Carretera Austral. Yelcho is another two hours south of the Rosselot lodge, where we stopped over on the way. The airport that served Chaitén is closed, so the former access via small plane from Puerto Montt is not possible at this time.

"Will Yelcho continue as it is, get better or have greater problems in the future? No one really knows. The lake is very deep and 24 miles long, but it is possible that the long-term and cumulative effects of the ash in the water will cause more damage to fish and their diet than is evident now. There's also the possibility of further eruptions and additional ash fall. For now, however, the fishing on Yelcho is very good. You can contact Gonzalo Cortés for accurate, up-to-the minute information. His e-mail address is: [gcortes@flyshop.cl](mailto:gcortes@flyshop.cl). He's deeply involved in Yelcho and in touch with authorities about matters of access and so on."

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■ If you are a bonefish fanatic, you probably remember subscriber Steve Blake's report in the July 2006 issue about a stopover trip he made to the island of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. Blake lives part of the year in New Zealand, you'll recall, and he likes to fly Air New Zealand on his way back to Los Angeles, at least in part because the company allows one free stopover. He's taken advantage of that benefit several times by stopping over in Raratonga, where he gets a 40-minute flight over to Aitutaki.

In Blake's 2006 report, he remarked positively on the number and size of the bonefish he caught in a special reserve that his guide, Jubilee Reu, had pushed local authorities to create. Reu, you may recall, told Blake he had helped a client take a 12-pounder there. Another guide told him of landing a 32-inch bonefish.

Well, the latest news from Aitu-



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taki is not good at all. Blake says he just fished there again and, in the course of two days, saw maybe 15 bonefish and hooked one. "I had not contacted Reu before arriving, as I needed an island break regardless," Blake writes. "Upon my arrival, Reu told me there were simply no more bonefish left, and he was correct. Jubilee says his efforts to establish an area where the locals were not allowed to net bonefish had not been supported locally. So, I ended up casting poppers for giant trevally. I had good success, but that does not take the sting out of what has happened to the bonefishing."

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■ And, finally, if you travel to fly fish, you assuredly know of the Orvis ELOG (Endorsed Lodge, Outfitter, Guide) Program. In all, Orvis currently has nearly 200 fly fishing companies and individuals enrolled in the program in North America – 50 lodges, 40 outfitters, 14 expeditions, 16 guide services and 73 guides. You can get the entire list of ELOG fly fishing members by going to: <http://www.orvis.com/intro.asp?subject=1723>. The company has been evaluating fly fishing operators for 22 years and just inducted 23 new members. Here is a list of the new mem-

bers: Camp Bonaventure; Miminiska Lodge – From Wilderness North; The Lodge and Spa at Cordillera; North Fork Ranch; The Ocean Reef Club; Broadacres Ranch; Eagle Creek Fly Shop; Ketchum On The Fly; Blackfoot River Outfitters; Midnight Sun Trophy Pike Adventures; Gunnison River Expeditions; PRO Outfitters; Bowman Bluewater; Back Country Guide Service; Capt. Matt Thomas; Dan Cone; Billy Trimble; Capt. Jeff Crumpton; Capt. Frank Catino; Capt. Eddie Potter; Capt. Scott Cormier; Capt. John Hand; Capt. Newman Weaver; David Hise; Patrick Fulkrod; and Nick Volk.

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## OUTFITTER CRITIQUES

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### The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

*(This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Angler Network 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 an Angler Network 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](http://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.)*

■ They say you can't please all of the people all of the time, but sometimes, apparently, you can. We have in hand six reports which give an across-the-board "Excellent" rating to an August trip to the remote Salmon Hole Lodge (902-835-8872; [www.salmonholelodge.com](http://www.salmonholelodge.com)) on the Lapoile River in **Newfoundland**. The reports are from Nova Scotians Hayden Bowles (who was returning for his fourth time), Kevin Hovey, Nathan McCarthy, Jim Murphy, Floyd Peterson and Chris Spears, all of whom drove to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, where they boarded the Marine Atlantic overnight ferry ([www.marine-atlantic.ca](http://www.marine-atlantic.ca)) to Port au Basques, Newfoundland. From there, it was an hour's drive along Newfoundland's remote southern coast to Rose Blanche, where they were picked up by a charter boat for the three-hour ride to the mouth of the river.

The only grumble about the trip in any of the reports revolved around the ferry being three hours late, costing the anglers part of a day's fishing.

"The guides waited for us and got us fishing as soon as we arrived on the river, so I didn't find it a big inconvenience," says Murphy. On the Lapoile, they were fishing both for Atlantic salmon (mainly grilse - only Bowles mentions a large salmon in any of the reports. Only about 10 per-



cent of the salmon run on the Lapoile is multi-sea-winter fish) and both resident and sea-run brook trout. Both salmon and trout were listed as abundant. The fishing, as on all of Newfoundland's scheduled salmon rivers, is fly-fishing-only, barbless hooks only. Seven- and eight-weight

rods got the nod for salmon from these anglers, and five and six-weight rods for the trout.

Jim Murphy, a newcomer to salmon angling, describes the fishing this way: "During my five-day stay, I landed both my first-ever Atlantic salmon and my largest brook trout ever. The number of salmon hooked was incredible." Kevin Hovey concurs, noting: "I hooked and released at least 16 salmon during the week. That's not counting all the long-line releases. It truly was the best salmon fishing I've experienced." Chris Spears agrees about the quality of the fishing: "A few of the trout were almost as big as the grilse (three and four pounds), and one was almost five pounds! Unbelievable trout and the best salmon fishing experience I've ever had."

Most of the fishing was done by wading, with some casting directly from the banks, all on what amounts to private water. As Spears put it: "There's nobody else around except members of your party, so there's no

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competition for pools, waiting your turn, or moving along for someone else... you just fish to your heart's content, or until you catch your quota for the day." Newfoundland law allows you to retain two grilse or release up to four in a day.

Apparently, even the weather cooperated, according to Nathan McCarthy: "When we first got there, the water was low, so the best time to fish was early in the morning and late at night. Our second day there it started to rain and the fishing got very good after that. When it rains on this river, the water rises fast. You are in a deep valley, all rock, so the water just runs right into the river."

Repeatedly, our reporters singled out the entire guide crew for praise: "Friendly, helpful guides who did everything they could to make it a great trip," "gracious hospitality shown by the all of the terrific guides," "The guides are friendly and not bossy, willing to give advice when asked," "The guides are just fantastic in every way. They make you feel at home".

The boat ride along the southern Newfoundland coast to reach the lodge drew universal accolades, as did the abundant wildlife (caribou, moose, bear). All of our reporters also commented on the star-gazing: "There aren't any roads or lights for miles, so the night skies are full of the brightest stars you'll ever see. Amazing!" Several commented on the unusual lack of black flies and mosquitoes — unheard of on a salmon river in summer.

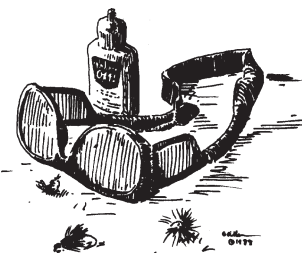
Hovey summed up the trip this way: "It truly is a trip of a lifetime. The isolated fishing with no crowds is just what the soul needs to help melt away the stresses of everyday life. The air is clean, fresh and pollution-free. It is a fantastic spot where the week will fly by."

The cost of the six-day trip is given as \$2000 (Canadian). At this writing, the Canadian dollar has fallen to about 81 cents against the US dollar. (*Editor note:* North Sydney, Nova Scotia, where you catch the ferry for

this trip, is about a 13-hour drive from Boston, or 4½ hours from Halifax. A second option is to fly commercial via Halifax into Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and rent a car there for a four-and-a-half-hour drive south to Rose Blanche, which takes you through some beautiful scenery and avoids the long ferry crossing.)

□

■ Subscribers Kim and David Frances have checked in with a delightful and informative account of a recent trip to **Cat Island, Bahamas**, that saw them fishing with and without a guide for bonefish and linking up for some very satisfying offshore fishing. They caught dorado on the latter, by the way, along with barracuda, yellowfin tuna and even a small white marlin. In between the fishing outings, they poked around the island



in a rented car, beachcombed for shells and generally enjoyed themselves. The report is an invaluable mini-guidebook to Cat Island, loaded with lodging, guide and other recommendations. It is so thorough and useful that a first-time visitor could use it to plan an entire week-long visit to Cat Island. We are putting Kim and David Frances on our Subscriber Honor Roll for taking the time to write this report and send it in.

The tips in this report are too numerous to list. One of the most important is the Frances' kind words for a series of books called Explorer Chartbooks ([www.explorercharts.com](http://www.explorercharts.com)). Anyone contemplating an on-your-own trip to the Bahamas will find these books invaluable, the Frances'

say. They cost \$49.50 each, but are worth that many times over, they say.

We won't try to summarize this report. If you like to arrange your own trips or you have ever eyed Cat Island as a destination, order this report. And stay tuned. Kim and David Frances say they have been exploring the Out Islands of the Bahamas since 1995. Their travels have taken them to Abaco, Andros and Long Island, as well as to the Turks & Caicos. Their travels aren't over either. Perhaps they will be inspired by a listing on our Honor Roll to share more of what they have learned about the Bahamas.

□

■ Now, here's a spectacular catch report: 25 to 30 rainbows averaging 20 inches the first day, plus a couple of sockeyes; the same number of rainbows the second day, but all of them averaging over 25 inches. What's most noteworthy about this catch report from subscriber Bryan Whiting is that he did not achieve it on an expensive, daily fly-out wilderness trip. Instead, he was floating the Kenai River between Skilak Lake and Soldotna, **Alaska**, within easy driving distance of Anchorage, on an excursion that cost \$250 per day per person.

Whiting and his son were fishing with Fred Telleen of Mystic Fishing (907-227-0549; [www.mysticfishing.com](http://www.mysticfishing.com)) based in Cooper Landing. Not surprisingly, Telleen gets "excellent" ratings in all categories. "Our family fished with Fred in 2004 and 2006. This trip, in 2008, was my son's high school graduation present. On both previous trips, we floated the Kenai Canyon from Sportsman Landing to Skilak lake. This year, we asked to explore the lower river. Fred told us it wouldn't be quite as good as the canyon, but we wanted to see new water."

Whiting says most of their fishing was from a large drift boat, though he notes that they occasionally fished from shore the first day and waded about half the time the second day. "The first day from Moose River to Soldotna was a typical Kenai float. We fished with 6-weight rods, using

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# THE ANGLING REPORT

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bead eggs. Though it was early July, there were no hatches and the fish were already into eggs. The second day, we planned to float from Skilak Lake to Moose River. However, the Kenai, normally tinged green with glacier water, was crystal clear as it exited Skilak Lake. Fred said this was the first time in 15-plus years he had seen this. Apparently, a late spring had delayed the melting of the glaciers feeding Skilak Lake.”

Because of the clear water, Whiting says they concentrated on the first three miles of the river as it exited from Skilak Lake, an area called the Dunes. “The Dunes are waves of gravel across the entire river about 100 yards apart,” says Whiting. “The top of the gravel wave has two to three feet of water above it; the deep trough between is way over your head. Rainbows were sitting both in front of and behind the dunes. We started with beads but changed to big

dark streamers. We would float along, spot a fish and cast to it with a streamer; it would follow and usually hit. We spent nine hours just floating down these dunes sightfishing to big rainbows, motoring back up to the first dune and doing it again. We were the only boat fishing this stretch of water, and we spent so much time there we didn’t even float down to Moose river where we had the trailer. Instead we motored back up through Skilak Lake.”

Whiting’s final assessment is nothing short of glowing: “Anytime you can float the Kenai, it is worth the effort. Going with a professional of Fred’s caliber makes it all the more special. He knows every inch of the river; knows where the fish hang out; can handle the boat; and his excite-



ment as you catch fish shows how much he enjoys his work. Fred is quite simply an extraordinary guide.”

■ Subscriber Jim Duke has good things to say about two days of guided fishing he enjoyed this past October on two different rivers in **Arkansas**. He started his trip with a day of boat fishing on the White River just below Bull Shoals Dam with guide Larry Babin, who he booked through Blue Ribbon Fly Shop (870-425-0447; [www.blueribbonflyfish.com](http://www.blueribbonflyfish.com)). According to Duke, everything about Babin’s performance was excellent, including his equipment, knowledge of water, general fishing knowledge, ability to communicate and overall personality. He says both rainbow and brown trout were abundant

and eager to take egg patterns weighted with shot and drifted below a strike indicator in eight to 12 feet of water. The day’s catch totaled approximately 20 rainbows measuring 12 to 16 inches, two browns measuring 17 and 19 inches and one 15-inch cutthroat. Duke gives the cost of his day of fishing as \$450, including guide, license and tip.

Two days later, Duke says he fished the Little Red River both above and below Lobo Landing with Orvis-endorsed guide Jamie Rouse (501-250-1275; [www.jamierouse.net](http://www.jamierouse.net)). Duke rates Rouse’s equipment as good, everything else about his abilities and services as excellent, and notes that he would recommend this trip to a friend. “I had a good day with a personable, competent guide,” he writes, going on to note that he landed between 20 and 25 fish, all measuring 10 to 15 inches. This was fishing from a boat, drifting a No. 12 San Juan Worm in pink or red along the bottom with a small shot below a strike indicator. The tab for his day on the water was \$400 for guide and tip.

■ Down in Chile, Tres Rios Lodge ([www.tresrioslodge.com](http://www.tresrioslodge.com)) gets top marks from subscriber John Pollard, who fished the Rio Petrohue, Yelcho, Rosselot, Figueroa and upper and lower Futaleufu for wild brown and rainbow trout. Pollard booked his trip through Patty Reilly’s Guided Connection (307-734-2716; [www.guidedconnections.com](http://www.guidedconnections.com)).

“I would not categorize the fishing as abundant, but it is certainly way above average because of the quality of the fish,” Pollard writes. “All our fishing was done from catarafts. We covered a lot of water every day and seldom got off the river before dark.” Though the area was experiencing a drought, Pollard indicates it didn’t have any impact on his enjoyment. “The fish are large and they act like it. They hit hard and were reluctant to come to hand. We saw a few hatches (mayflies, size 14 or 16) and caught a few fish on dry

## Feedback Sought On Jurassic Lake

■ Subscriber Bryan Whiting has asked us to put out a call for feedback on a place called Jurassic Lake in Argentina. He says he received an e-mail about the fishery that directed him to the following web site: <http://www.loopadventures.com/website2/1.0.2.0/1/1/index.php>. “I think the outfitter has a spot lower down in Argentina for sea-run browns. Jurassic Lake has big rainbows. I did a google search and found a small video about Jurassic Lake on a booking agent’s web site: [www.wherewisemenfish.com](http://www.wherewisemenfish.com). Jurassic Lake sounds like an intriguing place, but it appears to be a new venture. One always gets a little cautious about new spots. Given your extensive readership, perhaps a fellow subscriber has fished there. I would appreciate feedback. Thanks.” - Bryan Whiting, [whiting@sopris.net](mailto:whiting@sopris.net).

(Don Causey Note: Please copy me on any feedback you send Bryan Whiting at: [doncausey@msn.com](mailto:doncausey@msn.com).)



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flies, but the majority of the fishing was with sink tips and streamers.”

According to Pollard, the trip cost

\$3,060 per person. He recommends it highly: “This was our first trip to South America and we didn’t know

what to expect, but this trip exceeded all our expectations. We had the best guides ever and good fishing.”

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## Feedback On Hoodoo Fishing Lodge

*(Editor Note: In the October issue we told you about the new lodge Rod Schuh created on the Hoodoo River on the Alaska Peninsula of Alaska. In that report, we asked for reader feedback on the lodge, specifically on the late-season steelhead season. Well, subscriber John Baskin – 84 and still fishing hard – checked in near press time with this assessment. Anyone else have a different view?)*

■ With reference to your request for information about Hoodoo Lodge, I fished there this past October 10-17. Here is my account of the experience:

On arriving at Cold Bay, I met the party that had been there the previous week. I recognized a former acquaintance that I had fished with in South America and BC. I asked him how he had fared and he replied ‘caught one steelhead and lost two.’ This man is an excellent fly fisher, and if that was all he got, the fishing could not be good.

As it happened, I did not fare well either. I am not a good steelheader and I got just one strike on my last day. I think that I was not getting my fly deep enough. Other fishermen did somewhat better, some getting a couple of fish a day. I have no idea how many each caught in total. My fishing partner did well, averaging a couple of fish a day. The fish that I saw were in photos. They looked to be about 30 to 33 inches (10 to 12 pounds): good fish but not record-breakers. It is a long way to go to catch this size of steelhead. I can catch larger fish on the Columbia and its tributaries.

Hoodoo Lodge’s Rod Schuh actually has two lodges - one at Cold Bay and the other on the Hoodoo River. He has done an outstanding job in building both lodges. They are really first class. Great accommodations and great food. Excellent staff. Rod is heavily into hunting, which is very good, as there are monstrous grizzly

bears there, as well as wolverines and other predators such as lynx and wolves. Rod is trying to put a second string to his bow by adding fishing. I liked Rod. He is a straight-shooter and the hardest-working man that I have ever met.

There were about nine fishermen at the lodge and that was a bit of a problem the day Rod flew us in to an assigned beat for the day. As he had limited seats on his plane, some anglers had to wait for him to return to be flown out. Once my partner and I were caught on the Hoodoo when a windstorm came up. We had just passed a small cabin (we were drifting in a rubber boat with no motor) and



the guides decided it would be safer to spend the night on shore. With no shelter, I don’t think that I would have fared so well. At 84, I am not as hardy as I used to be. Fortunately, Hoodoo Lodge has permission to use the hut in an emergency (it belongs to some hunters), with the usual proviso that it be kept clean and all food, etc. be replaced. I wore two of everything: socks, pants, shirts, sweaters, and I still never felt comfortable. It wasn’t cold, in the 40s, but I think that the humidity was high.

The cabin had two bunks. The clients got the bunks and the guides slept on the floor between them. Cramped quarters. On getting out of bed during the night to pee, I acci-

dentally stepped on a guide’s head. I am sure that was not appreciated. The cabin is surrounded by an electric fence to keep out grizzlies. We were warned not to piss on it or risk being electrocuted. There was no prescribed area to defecate. Just take the shovel provided, walk a reasonable distance away, dig a hole, do your thing and cover the hole. Shit, shovel and shut up. I thought that a crapper placed over a hole in the ground would have been better.

One day we fished the David River. It’s a nice little stream. Might be classified as a creek in Washington. I put away my 15-foot Spey rod and got out my 9-foot, four-piece Sage rod. Just right for this small river. Things were the same there as on the Hoodoo - lots of spawning coho but no steelhead. The coho males were continually fighting and disturbing the steelhead. During my trips all the rivers were at least a foot too high. This may have contributed to the poor fishing. High water allows fish to scatter throughout a river and makes them harder to find.

Will I go back? Don’t know. There are other places to go where I can catch fish. This season was exploratory. Next year, I believe the cost will go up considerably. In all, there were about nine clients at the lodge. Some were seasoned steelheaders; at least one was not. He had never caught a steelhead before. On tying into one, he dropped his rod and grabbed the reel with both hands. Not an approved method of playing a fish. Still hasn’t caught one. Probably never will unless he drastically changes his method of playing a frisky fish.

The guides carried handguns they called 44s. Supposedly capable of taking care of a grizzly at close quarters. It might be a good idea for a cli-

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ent to ask for a demonstration before venturing out. If the guide should perform in an emergency the way the novice steelheader did on his first fish, things could get interesting! - *John Baskin.*

*(Postscript:* Given the nature of Baskin's comments, we thought it only fair to give The Fly Shop a chance to weigh in. Here is what the shop's Ryan Peterson had to say:

"Thanks for forwarding us John Baskin's report on his steelhead trip to Hoodoo Lodge. John's humble old world charm is, well, charming. He's been a customer and friend of ours on many trips over the years and is a much harder and a more broadly experienced steelhead flyfisher than he allows. After having spoken to nearly every other angler who visited Hoodoo during the 2008 steelhead season, and having spent a week there myself (the week preceding John's), I feel as though his report could describe any other steelhead angler's experience this year. It is spot on. I'd like to comment on a couple of technical points, though, and then lay out plans for the 2009 steelhead season, which take into account the experiences of John and other anglers this past fall.

"Firstly, where John notes other anglers during his week 'averaged a couple fish per day,' this should be corrected to 'averaged one fish per week...if that.' The numbers are now in, and there was not a single week when more than eight steelhead were

landed by a group.

"Second, John notes there were 'about nine fishermen at the lodge.' The maximum capacity of Hoodoo Lodge is eight during king season, nine during silver salmon season and six during steelhead season.

"Third, while John's description of the hunter's hut that he was marooned in for a night is accurate to a tee, I hope readers recognize (as John does) that they were only in this hut because of an unexpected extreme weather event. In fact, the night John spent in that hut was the only night anyone spent in it all year. The normal accommodations, at either the lodge or the (optional) upriver spike-camp, are decidedly more deluxe.

"Finally, other than the two day/one night upper-river float that involves a floatplane put-in shuttle, and impromptu free fly-outs to the David River which Rod added to the weekly beat system this year, the bulk of the beats are accessed via jet boat from Hoodoo Lodge.

"As John notes in his report, 'This season was exploratory.' Despite the low numbers of hookups on steelhead in 2008, we will host continued steelhead exploration in 2009. The rationale is that our data points were inconclusive this season given the enormous silver salmon run. This affected our steelhead fishing in that you couldn't keep the salmon off the hook. Consequently, a real sense of steelhead numbers may have been obscured. For instance, one day while

floating the upper river, I had very good spotting light from the boat and saw an estimated 30 steelhead in a two-mile stretch, and most of them were in the middle of a hoard of silver salmon.

"In sum, we don't know if this year was typical, or a fluke. What we plan to do is extend the silver salmon season by two weeks in 2009, and we will offer just two weeks (instead of five) of steelhead exploratories, October 2-16. Contrary to Mr. Baskin's projection of a price increase, the price for that trip will go down significantly in recognition of the fact that this season did not turn up as many steelhead as anyone would have liked. A full week exploratory will cost \$3,950.

"In order to better accommodate anglers on the choice water that was discovered in the upper Hoodoo River, Rod Schuh has decided that he will put in a second outpost camp there in 2009 and offer optional three-day/two-night float trips. This will shorten daily float time and increase daily fishing time on this fantastic stretch of water. Additionally, fly-out explorations of the David River and of one other new river will be exciting, optional side trips for those who are interested.

"Thanks again for the opportunity to respond to Mr. Baskin's trip report. I hope at age 84 I am still traveling the world, as John is, casting into the wind and snow, mouth watering at the prospect of a wild steelhead on my next cast. - *Ryan Peterson.*

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## ● Back of the Book ●

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