ANGLING DESTINATIONS INCORPORATED

TiRiAiViEiL NiOiTiEiS

April, 2002

REMOTE NEW SPOTS

Until very recently, the most productive and least visited boundaries of angling adventure were found relatively close to home. These remote areas teemed with fish and offered angling paradise to those willing to make the journey. Lodges such as Belize River Lodge, Deep Water Cay Club and the Great Abaco Bonefish Club represented angling's frontiers to most adventuresome fishermen. These tried-and-true destinations, and many others like them, still offer great fishing and are consistently visited by anglers who often return year after year, drawn back by the reliable fishing and comfortable accommodations. But there will always be a tribe of anglers who seek the unknown and want to fish the limits. These angler are, of course, the same group who initially found the destinations that ultimately became these tried-and-true spots. But when things become too tame and fish too smart, these adventuresome anglers seek the wild places on our planet. The "blow your hair back" spots where the fish are stupid, plentiful and often very big.

In the last few years, with the advent of the Internet and efficient global air travel, the most adventuresome of anglers are pushing out in many directions unheard of to previous generations. With their radar screen constantly scanning for the very best opportunities, these fisherman are venturing further and further from the known into more and more remote areas. We understand their motivations well and although we still like to visit the dependable spots near home, we can attest to the piscatorial riches offered in some of the most remote corners of the world. Our efforts in the Seychelles have been nothing short of fantastic with huge bonefish, an incredible diversity of fish and the best trevally angling imaginable rewarding those willing to make the journey. The irrefutable fact is… the tougher a place is to get to, the better the angling opportunities usually are.

It is for this reason that our antennae are always up. We investigate any promising opportunities. We pour over satellite maps, track down rumors, listen to our client's reports and separate those destinations that hold promise from those that hold none. If our imagination is captured and our intuition makes a convincing argument, then we do the best part of our job... we go there! We fish and explore the area, then report back to you.

With this in mind, we would like to make you privy to some "new" destinations that you may have heard a bit about or you will hear a great deal about soon. These are all destinations that have cleared our hurdles and have gone from rumor to "we need to look into this" to "we gotta go, call the airlines!" We have trips planned to each of these destinations in the next few months. We have enough reliable information to reasonably conclude that these destinations will offer superb angling opportunities... in absolutely enthralling settings.

Some of you have already planned trips with us to these new spots and others are going with us on our initial

INSIDE:

page 1 Remote New Destinations
page 2 New Destinations (cont.)
page 3 Letter to the Editor
page 4 Argentina Trip Report
page 4 Days of the Full Moon
page 5 Abaco Island
page 6 Abaco Island (cont.)
page 7 Seychelles Trip Report
page 7 What We Can Learn From Each Other
page 8 The Perfect Fish
page 9 Budget Bonefishing
page 10 Affordable Destinations
page 11 Destinations of Interest

exploratory trips. If you have not made such plans, and if any of these destinations interest you, give us a call and we'll fill you in on all the details.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

A devoted angler who loves to bonefish has spent the past few years exploring some of the remote regions of the Tahitian Islands aboard a comfortable mothership. He has identified several incredible areas with vast bonefish flats that are home to huge Pacific bonefish. While perhaps not as prolific numbers-wise as the Seychelles, the sheer size of these fish makes this destination unique. Bonefish of 8-11 lbs. are relatively common and opportunities at much larger fish up to 14 lbs. are well-documented! Outstanding fishing for giant, golden and bluefin trevally and other species is available on any tide... and all this only 8 hours from L.A.! Our outfitter will pick you up in Papeete and transfer you by plane to these remote atolls where your mothership awaits at anchor. From this comfortable motor yacht, you have the choice of some truly amazing possibilities. Using small Zodiacs to transport anglers, all the fishing is done while wading or walking beach and reef edges. Angling Destinations will be hosting a trip to this region in the fall of 2002. If you're interested in this hosted trip or in a trip of your own, please call us soon as space is very limited.

PUNTA GORDA

The folks at El Pescador on Ambergris Cay have, year in and year out, provided great fishing on the flats of Belize for permit, tarpon and bonefish. El Pescador is well known in angling circles. Because of this excellent reputation, we have followed with great interest the development of El Pescador's new satellite lodge in the remote reaches of southern Belize. Located just a stone's throw from Guatemala, El Pescador Punta Gorda is located (one hour by plane from Belize City) in the magnificent rain forest of the Toledo District. Sitting on a high hill overlooking the jungle, awe inspiring picture perfect vistas bring the beauty of the Belizean rainforest to life. Brand new air-conditioned cabanas give you plenty of privacy and are very comfortable with their two queen beds, spacious sitting areas and private bathrooms. Just 20 minutes away, some of the world's very best permit flats lie near Punta Icacos, Wild Cane Caye and Punta Negra. There are also plenty of inland lagoons and *cenotes* with good opportunities for tarpon and snook making this spot a sure winner.

NEW CALEDONIA

Located in the South Pacific northeast of Australia, New Caledonia offers excellent opportunities for huge Pacific bonefish. It is fair to say that New Caledonia is primarily a trophy bonefishery. Extensive flats on the main island are perfect for poling or wading and hold some very big bonefish. Excellent fishing for giant, golden and bluefin trevally, as well as a host of other fly rod species is also available. Outfitter Felipe Leroux and Australian angling expert, Dean Butler, have put together a great fishing package which includes spacious, bungalow-style accommodations and delicious French cuisine. This lovely beach inn has a classic South Seas ambiance and easy access to the best fishing areas. Small and intimate, the program hosts only six anglers at a time. As the reputation of this trophy fishery grows, we feel availability will become very limited, so please plan accordingly. Angling Destinations has reserved dates for hosted trips leaving on June 2 and again in October, 2002.

MAYAGUANA ISLAND

As the last unexplored island in the Bahama's chain, Mayaguana has been a closely guarded secret. Located about fifty miles east of Acklins Island, Mayaguana sits alone... unexplored and relatively unfished. Because Mayaguana's habitat is not extensive, commercial interests have shied away from this island to focus on other areas. Recently, an experienced American outfitter purchased new fiberglass canoes and spent the past year exploring the bonefishing potential of the island. All fishing on Mayaguana is self-guided (there are no bonefish guides available) and these canoes permit silent access to more remote areas where anglers can then wade the rich flats probing the island for its hidden piscine treasures. The lodge, twenty minutes drive from the flats, is clean and comfortable with air-conditioned rooms and private bathrooms. Meals are well prepared and feature all the classic Bahamian favorites. An on-site American manager will attend to all of your needs, provide transport to the flats each day and give you instruction on the most productive areas to fish. If you are an experienced angler, confident of your bonefishing skills, you may want to get off the beaten path and experience this last unexplored and unfished island in the Bahamas.

We are working hard researching other remote locales including Kamchatka and other areas in the South Seas, just to name a few. We hope you'll join us on one of our adventures soon and please call us for details on any of the destinations briefly described above.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This letter comes to us from Alaskan guide nonpareil Chuck Ash in response to our latest newsletter article entitled " The Future of Our Sport". If you recall, this article discussed the important topic of truth management as it relates to fly fishing. Mr. Ash, in this letter, further clarifies some important subtleties and makes an important contribution to the discussion. If you would like a copy of our last issue, give us a call.

Dear Angling Destinations,

I read with interest your column on The Future of Our Sport (A.D. Travel Notes, October, 2001). It was well written and the philosophy behind it was sound, but due to the significant number of neophytes entering our sport, I feel that additional practical advice may be warranted. With that in mind, let me offer some thoughts on how to directly apply your theories.

Before I get into the specifics of application, two things should be made clear concerning the philosophy of truth management. The first is the purpose of truth management. It is employed for what I like to call the three E's: enjoyment, enrichment and entertainment, and this is important for and about the sport of fly fishing. Nothing marks an inexperienced angler so indelibly as some manipulation of the truth for direct and obvious personal gain, especially if it is at the expense of another angler (unless that angler is a loudmouth or some other form of insufferable prick who has demonstrated beyond a doubt that he sorely deserves it). It will become apparent as one gains experience that if truth management is done properly, one's personal reputation is enhanced as an *indirect* result... but it is never the reason for the activity in the first place. The second point is that the act of managing the truth is never one of commission, but rather one of omission. In other words, it's not what you say, but what you don't say that gives power and plausibility to your story. All guys know this even if they have never fished a day before in their lives. This is the stuff of personal sports exploits and sexual conquest stories. Inference and innuendo will allow the listener's imagination to take him places that facts and details would never let him go. Use the strength of his imagination in your favor. This is the judo of story telling. Besides, if you commit a purposeful misrepresentation of facts, that is just plain lying and you might as well start bait fishing. With all that in mind, let's look at some specific do's and don'ts when managing the truth. Here are some possible responses, good and bad, to common inquiries:

Question #1

"How did you do?" or "How many did you catch?"

Don't Say

"I caught four"

"I got skunked"

Do Say

"I had a good day"

"I had a great day"

"I caught some nice fish today"

"I lost a dandy just as that caddis hatch got going."

"I lost count"

Question #2

"How did Jim do?"

Don't Say

"He got four"

"He got skunked"

Do Say

"I don't know... Jimmie, how'd you do?"

(Jimmie's not going to develop any skills if he doesn't practice them.)

Question #3

"How big were they?"

Don't Say

"I caught a 9 incher"

"I caught a 3 pounder"

Do Say

"They were running small, but I fooled a nice one early."

"I found some nice fish. The biggest was maybe three"

Question #4

"Where did you catch them?"

Don't Say

"On the South Fork at near Frenchman's Landing."

Do Say

"Upriver"

"Lip of the pools"

"The upper lip"

I hope that this will give some insight to your novice readers, and maybe explain why so many of our presidents and politicians are avid fly fishermen.

Your buddy,

Chuck

ARGENTINA

Because many of Argentina's legendary rivers are connected to lakes, trout tend to move more in search of suitable habitat than they do in the American West. It may be difficult for us to understand that just because one stretch of river held fish in December, there are no assurances it will do so in February. This has critical implications to anglers contemplating a fixed lodge that has access to only a certain stretch of river. Some lodges have extended periods that offer spectacularly mediocre fishing. And this often happens when Americans most want to visit... during January and February!

When we began planning this trip, we wanted to be aware of these seasonal implications and avoid any "should have been here last week" outcomes. We wanted to use an outfitter who was flexible and willing to monitor the pulse of the country's rivers. We wanted him to owe allegiance to no lodge. We picked an outfitter who planned to customize the trip according to our wishes and choose a river that was fishing best at the time of our arrival. Since good fishing was our number one priority, we opted to do a deluxe camping trip and forgo a few of the creature comforts found at fixed lodges. Here is a report on how our selection of an oufitter and a river turned out:

The Alumine is a classic, high dessert river; its waters elegantly framed with sculpted canyon cliffs, poplar groves and dry rolling hills - a true wilderness that few North Americans, or Argentines for that matter, ever see. Classic riffles and runs over rocky bars, long pools and great pocket water only partially describe the beauty of this Patagonian gem.

We covered some 60 miles and enjoyed beautiful summer weather, typical Patagonian winds, and challenging, yet productive, fishing for deep, strong rainbows and browns. We caught numerous rainbows from 18-22" on streamers, parachute adams and sauce (pronounced souse-eh) worm patterns. The sauce worm naturals are blown into the shaded pools at the water's edge from the willows that line the river's banks.

Our two guides, Esteban and Guillermo, were great. Technically proficient, they were also very helpful, gracious and entertaining to be with... and they spoke excellent English! Our camp manager/chef, Pedro, cheerfully broke down camp each morning, rowed passed us mid-morning, prepared a healthy delicious lunch, passed us again mid-afternoon and had camp set up and dinner started by the time we pulled into camp.

Excellent meals were taken, except for lunch, in a comfortable dining tent. Fare included roast chicken, steaks and traditional Argentine stews. We had a different Argentine wine each evening and none of us, even in our most deluded state, could ever have termed this type of deluxe camping as "roughing it".

We spent one night at the beautiful estancia *Aida* just below the Malleo's confluence with the Alumine. We took hot showers, ate fresh cherries and apples from the orchard and enjoyed a sumptuous *asado* of fresh lamb cooked Argentine-style over an open fire.

I would recommend this trip to anyone who loves the out-of-doors and loves to fish. Even if you choose to camp only one or two nights of a week's itinerary, you will most certainly enjoy the experience with this well-seasoned and well-organized crew.

And oh yes. . . we saw no other fishermen on the Alumine. We had no bugs, no rain and only one day of overcast, chilly weather. We experienced virtually no problems due to Argentina's economic woes. We found the Argentine people to be warm and gracious. Our cabin fever temporarily cured, we expect a sudden relapse next winter. Not surprisingly, we made plans for next year's trip on the flight home.

Angling Destinations will be hosting a group next winter (January 11-18, 2003) timed to coincide with the peak of the sauce worm hatch. We may float two rivers next year because most of us are eager to explore some other Argentine waters. Please let us know if you are interested in our hosted trip or if you would like to make plans for a trip south on alternate dates of your own choosing. And please remember, you can choose to camp out every night as we did *or* you can base your trip out of many fine hotels and still sample a number of other fine Argentine rivers.

Please see our complete trip report at *www.anglingdestinations.com* listed under the recent adventures section.

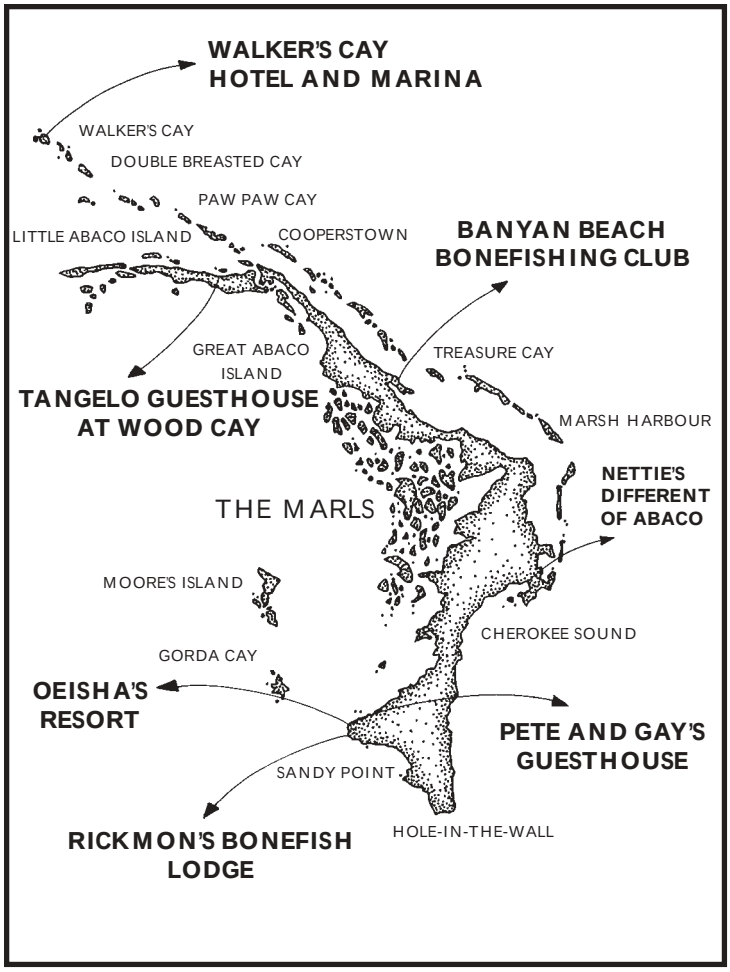
Days of the Full Moon

2002	*2003*
May 26	January 18
June 24	February 16
July 24	March 18
August 22	April 16
September 21	May 16
October 21	June 14
Novemebr 20	July 13
December 19	August 12

ABACO ISLAND

THIS IS THE SECOND INSTALLMENT IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON VARIOUS ISLANDS IN THE BAHAMAS. IN OUR OCTOBER ISSUE, WE DISCUSSED ANDROS ISLAND AND IN THIS ISSUE, WE'LL STAY IN THE NORTHERN REACHES OF THIS ISLAND NATION WITH ABACO ISLAND. IN SUBSEQUENT ISSUES, WE'LL DESCRIBE A NEW ISLAND UNTIL WE REACH INAGUA IN THE FAR SOUTH OF THE BAHAMAS CHAIN.

If you flew directly east, a little less than 150 miles from Palm Beach, Florida, eventually a long narrow archipelago would appear stretching in a lazy arc for over 120 miles from Walker's Cay in the north to Hole-in the-Wall in the south. This island group known collectively as The Abacos, consists of Little Abaco Island, Great Abaco Island and numerous smaller offshore cays. These offshore cays offer some excellent bonefishing opportunities all the way from Double Breasted Cay in the north down through the leeward (western) shore ending with Moore's Island and Gorda Cay... just offshore from Sandy Point. The windward cays do offer some excellent bonefishing opportunities in the north especially around Paw Paw Cay. Many of these cays can be difficult to reach and adventuresome anglers need to plan well if these offshore cays are their intended goal. As you get to the island's windward mid-section, the flats begin to disappear and more developed areas appear especially from Treasure Cay down to Marsh Harbour.



Despite the superb opportunities presented by some of these northern and western offshore cays, Abaco's reputation as a world-class bonefish destination was cemented closer to shore in the vast leeward area that stretches from Cooperstown in the north to the village of Sandy Point in the south. The locals call this area the marls and were it not for a single fish species, this area would be labeled a vast wasteland - an area of no use to anyone.

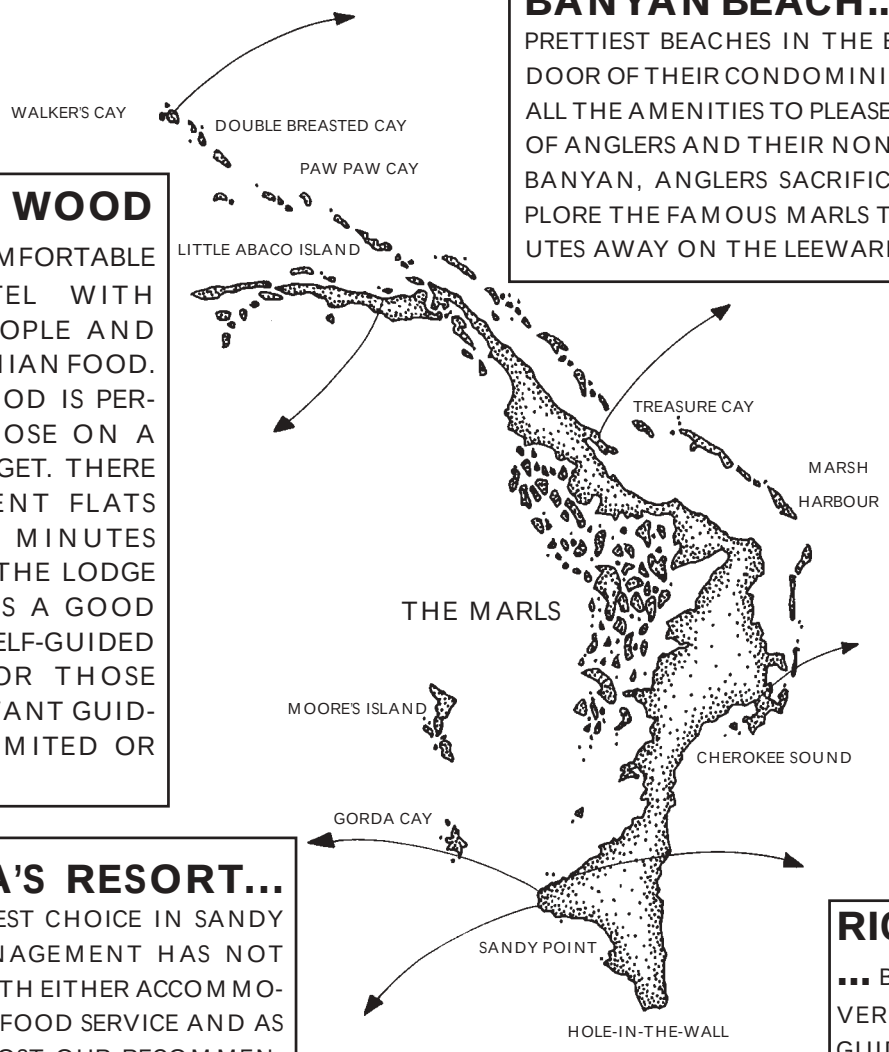
But the elusive bonefish has single-handedly raised the marl's reputation from wasteland to world class angling paradise. The marls occupy 400 square miles of the island's uninhabited west coast. It is an area of twisted mangroves, countless unnamed islands and endless acres of unspoiled flats filled with uninitiated and very cooperative bonefish. Certainly, to our minds, an area that no serious flats fisherman should ignore. But what is perhaps most amazing about the marls is not their immensity, but that despite considerable attention from the angling community, much of the marls remains unexplored and unfished. The marls have been nibbled at from the north out of Treasure Cay, gently prodded from the south out of Sandy Point and probed from the middle out of Cherokee Sound. But the great interior has remained virtually untouched serving as a nursery, a fish hatchery if you will, for the more reachable flats both north and south on this leeward shore. This gives Abaco Island great resiliency to fishing pressure and probably helps to explain why the Abacos have withstood the test of time. While the marls are known for lots of fish, this island's proximity to deeper water and its more northerly position in the Bahama's chain has also earned Abaco a well-deserved reputation as a "big fish" spot. So if you're looking for a destination that combines lots of fish with shots at big fish, do not overlook this hotspot in the northern Bahamas!

ABACO ISLAND, BAHAMAS

WALKER'S CAY... WHILE WALKER'S CAY DOES NOT HAVE GREAT BONEFISHING NEARBY, THIS RESORT DOES HAVE GREAT BLUEWATER AND SCUBA OPPORTUNITIES AND GOOD BONEFISHING, IF YOU'RE WILLING TO MAKE A RUN. WALKER'S CAY IS A GOOD BET FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES LOOKING FOR A MIXED BAG. WITH ALL THE AMENITIES INCLUDING LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS AND EXCELLENT CUISINE, WALKER'S CAY IS A UNIQUE SPOT THAT IS VERY EASY TO REACH.

BANYAN BEACH... GUESTS ENJOY ONE OF THE PRETTIEST BEACHES IN THE BAHAMAS OUT THE FRONT DOOR OF THEIR CONDOMINIUM. THIS DESTINATION HAS ALL THE AMENITIES TO PLEASE MIXED GROUPS COMPRISED OF ANGLERS AND THEIR NON-FISHING COMPANIONS. AT BANYAN, ANGLERS SACRIFICE NOTHING AND CAN EXPLORE THE FAMOUS MARLS THAT BEGIN ONLY TEN MINUTES AWAY ON THE LEEWARD SIDE OF THE ISLAND.

TANGELO WOOD ... A VERY COMFORTABLE SMALL HOTEL WITH FRIENDLY PEOPLE AND GOOD BAHAMIAN FOOD. TANGELO WOOD IS PERFECT FOR THOSE ON A LIMITED BUDGET. THERE ARE EXCELLENT FLATS ONLY TEN MINUTES WALK FROM THE LODGE MAKING THIS A GOOD CHOICE FOR SELF-GUIDED TRIPS OR FOR THOSE WHO ONLY WANT GUIDING ON A LIMITED OR DAILY BASIS.



DIFFERENT OF ABACO... NETTIE'S OFFERS A BEAUTIFUL SPOT AND THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY TO FISH THE INTERIOR FLATS OF THE WORLD FAMOUS MARLS. NETTIE'S IS A UNIQUE SPOT OFFERING BOTH THE MORE UPSCALE SEA SHELL SUITES AND THE MORE TRADITONAL BONEFISH LODGE STYLE ROOMS AT THE HERITAGE INN.

OEISHA'S RESORT... ONCE THE BEST CHOICE IN SANDY POINT, MANAGEMENT HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH EITHER ACCOMMODATIONS OR FOOD SERVICE AND AS SUCH, HAS LOST OUR RECOMMENDATION.

RICKMON'S LODGE ... BUILT TWO YEARS AGO BY THE VERY WELL-RESPECTED LOCAL GUIDE RICARDO BURROWS, THIS BEAUTIFUL NEW LODGE SITS ON THE WATER WITH A GREAT VIEW OF THE "TOWN" FLATS. GREAT GUIDES, A/C ROOMS, AND EXCELLENT BAHAMIAN COOKING MAKE RICKMON OUR TOP CHOICE IN SANDY POINT. RICKMON'S SHOULD BE ON ANY ANGLER'S SHORT LIST.

PETE AND GAY'S GUESTHOUSE... LOCATED NEAR THE DOCK WITH A GREAT VIEW OF THE HARBOUR, PETE AND GAY'S HAS A LOYAL FOLLOWING WITH MANY EXPERIENCED ANGLERS. WITH DELICIOUS BAHAMIAN FOOD, COMFORTABLE, IF NOT FANCY, ROOMS AND A WELL-RUN FISHING PROGRAM, PETE AND GAY'S HAS AN AMBIANCE REMINISCENT OF THE GREAT BAHAMIAN FISHING LODGES OF TWENTY YEARS AGO.

INDIAN OCEAN EXPLORER

A report on our November 27 to December 4, 2001 trip to the southern Seychelles:

Superlatives run amok in the angling world. The best...the biggest...the most... you all know the drill. Most destinations make these claims at one time or another, but it can sometimes be a bit of a stretch to deliver. One destination that has consistently lived up to the hype is the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. We, and many of our clients, have enjoyed some of the finest angling opportunities imaginable in this island nation.

We were, therefore, extremely eager to return when presesnted with the opportunity to collect some of our more adventuresome clients and come explore the even more remote southern atolls of Astove and Cosmoledo.

Our base of operation for exploring these remote atolls was the 113' *Indian Ocean Explorer*. We spent a week exploring The Aldabra Group which contains the largest raised coral atolls in the world. These atolls are so pure and pristine, so secluded and untouched that it took days for us to absorb the wildness and remoteness of our surroundings. We cannot even begin to go into many of the details here. Suffice it to say that this trip offered, without a doubt, some of the finest angling opportunities for bonefish and trevally available in the world today.

This trip was an exceptional, even extraordinary, experience. And while the angling was superb, it was much more than just fishing. This was a grand adventure involving intricate logistics, a wonderful cast of characters, a few hardships and successes too numerous to count... all played out in one of the most remote and stunning locales found anywhere on this planet.

With new frontiers emerging all the time, we may be able to find other spots with great fishing and tremendous natural beauty, but it is hard to believe that we will be able to find anything better than what exists in the far reaches of the southern Seychelles.

We understand that visiting the Seychelles is a major undertaking, but for those anglers willing to make the investment of time, energy and money, we feel certain they will return with a few superlatives of their own rolling off their tongues!

We have already scheduled a return engagement for April 1-8, 2003. The *Indian Ocean Explorer* can only take ten anglers so, if you're interested in this hosted trip, please reserve your space as soon as possible. If you are interested in alternate dates for you and your group, please give us a call.

If you are interested in the details of this trip, please give us a call and we'll send you a full trip report. You can also look at *www.anglingdestinations.com* and find the entire trip report listed under recent adventures... pick the Explorer's Seychelles at the bottom of the page.

A FEW THINGS SALTWATER ANGLERS COULD LEARN FROM FRESHWATER ANGLERS

- How to cast for accuracy.
- How to be quiet and sneak up on fish unobserved.
- How to be observant and notice small indications of fish activity.
- How to mend line to get better drifts in currents.
- How to make near-perfect presentations by looking and thinking more... and casting less.
- The importance of "matching the hatch" i.e. identify what fish are feeding on.

A FEW THINGS FRESHWATER ANGLERS COULD LEARN FROM SALTWATER ANGLERS

- How to cast for distance and into the wind.
- How to be quiet in a boat.
- How to strip strike... very important with streamers.
- How to cast quickly and deliver the fly with less false casting.
- That your first cast is your money cast... make it your best.
- The importance of landing a fish quickly so as to minimize stress to the fish.

THE PERFECT FISH

In today's world, traveling anglers are inundated with fishing propaganda. Big fish pictures subtly suggest profound success on nearly every cast. Glossy brochures and slick websites raise expectations and promise results.

But it is all just fishing and fishing areas are what they are. Most destinations, despite claims to the contrary, are somewhat fickle and unpredictable... and therefore intriguing. Fishing is a skill sport and fish don't always conform to business projections or marketing plans or even sloppy casts. Fishing is not a product. It cannot be marketed or quantified. It is after all, a sport! Luckily, most anglers understand this and they understand that having the outcome be unknown is the essence of any adventure. Ultimately, anglers do not remember numbers or size... they remember great moments, classic moments and conveniently, forget the bad.

At the end of our fishing carreers, we all hope to have collected enough of these wonderful moments to make the journey worthwhile. What we all chase is that perfect moment... that perfect fish.

It is very still this morning with only a slight windscuff sullying small portions of the flat. It is humid from last night's rain, but not yet sticky... my shirt is still dry enough to clean a sunscreen smudge off my sunglasses. The fish are nervous and wary and able to detect the slightest change in the midst of all this calm.

I pick up a few fish as I wade to the big mangrove bush that marks the beginning of my creek's "trophy" flats. Here, three small bays fan out like the lobes of a cloverleaf. It's here that I hope to find the perfect bonefish. All anglers play games... biggest, most, but since this is my game, I get to set the rules.

By my criteria, the perfect bonefish must be big... at least 7 lbs… 10 lbs. would be better. It must be tailing and it must be found in impossibly shallow water, either pushing the limits of a new rising tide or tempting fate by foraging on the last of a falling tide. The perfect fish must be found on a beautiful flat, but since bonefish are rarely seen in ugly areas, this is usually not a hard criteria to fill.

Now here's where I come in… After I find this perfect fish, I must stalk him and make sure he receives a quiet, precise cast. A long cast into the wind with only a few false casts would be great. He would eat my fly (which I tied, of course), fight hard, and most importantly, he would be caught. Granted, these are tough criteria to fill given my skill level.

Since the tide is falling this morning, my fish will have to be a gambler at heart; he will be betting he can find a seafood dinner of crab or shrimp before the tide abandons him to die on this fine white sand. The fish I caught on the outside of the big mangrove bush were great fun. They confidently picked up my blind gotchas and screamed off blowing up bonefish after bonefish that were hidden from my prying eyes beneath the glassy smooth surface of the flat. But these fish weren't perfect… My perfect fish would be found up ahead, further inland in one of the little bays beyond the bush.

As I reach the bright green *man-o-war* bush with its muted red roots, needle fish erupt and flee skipping across the water like tossed flat stones. Some nervous water catches my peripheral vision, but the wake is too small and jittery to be bonefish – probably just a school of mullet or snapper. I search one bay, then the next, then the last… nothing. Maybe the tide's too low and I'm too late. Perhaps my perfect fish will just have to wait and I'll have to be content with stalking the bones in the calf-deep water on the outside of the bush.

Suddenly, almost imperceptibly, just as I was turning to leave, I see a glint to my left at the far end of the bay. The glint becomes a tail and the tail becomes a back… a big back! This big bone is all the way at the end of the bay boldly challenging the falling tide. I could wait here in this deeper water by the bush for him to come out. He will have to come out soon… very soon! But I am not a patient man. I am not wired to wait and if I stay here in deeper water, he will not be the perfect fish by the time he reaches me . He will still be big and wary and smart, but he won't be tailing in impossibly shallow water.

So I began my stalk by climbing up and over a sandy hummock. Crusty limestone snaps under my weight and makes me wince. Small channels that I seek to lower my profile get softer as I get deeper into the bay. Once, I almost lose my balance. A fall here or even a quick splashy move and I'll be done.

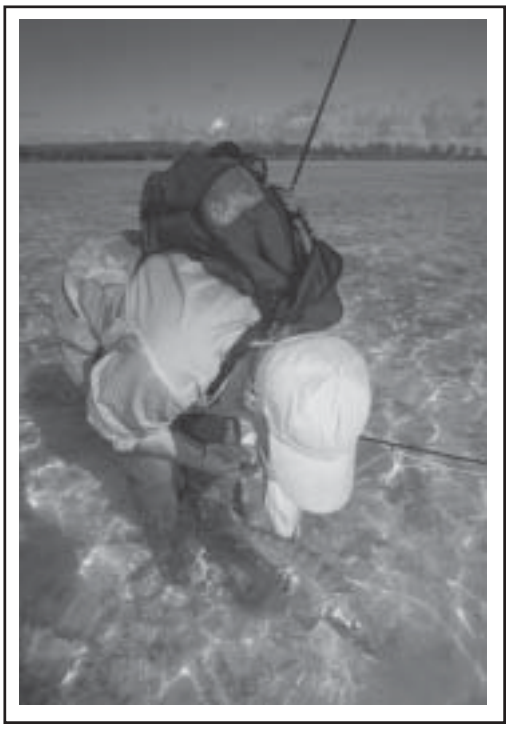
My bone's dark green ribbed back is now out of the water as he inspects every nook and cranny at the absolutely shallowest end of the bay. Then he turns, suddenly heeding the silent call of the falling tide, and begins to slowly, yet methodically, tail out of the bay, his triangular snout headed right toward me.

I throw my fly well ahead of him knowing he must swim over it… and he does. I strip once and he pounces, full of confidence. I strip strike and he explodes with me attached. He careens into a hummock and pauses to nose into the sand in an effort to dislodge this stinging shrimp. He blows up again and I hold on to the line a touch too long and in a nanosecond he's gone. My fault... my reactions were too slow and I'm left with mouth agape and without that delicious tension at the end of my rod. My perfect fish races past me no more than five feet away. His big black eye watches me all the way until he disappears into the glare from the big bush. I'm left perched atop both a sandy hummock and the proverbial goose egg feeling like my pocket was just picked.

In earlier days, I would have been peeing in my pants angry and hurling insults at myself, but now I chuckle (somewhat ingenuously, I admit), tie on a new fly and climb out of the bay to wade the shoreline back to where I last saw my friends. With any luck, I'll get another shot tomorrow.

BUDGET BONEFISH OPPORTUNITIES

Bonefishing is one of the best of the angling sports… maybe the best! But if you don't take the time to acquire the basic skills or if you let your skills rust, you're certain to be disappointed on the flight home. To be sure, the best way to get good at bonefishing is to spend time on the water. You can subscribe to all the magazines, read all the how-to books and watch all the videos you want, but there is simply no substitute for actually being out there in the salt. On the flats you train your eyes to see fish and learn the critical subtleties such as presentation, retrieve, and hookset that can often mean the difference between success and failure. And because bonefish live in such exotic locations, it takes a commitment of time, energy and money to learn these requisite skills.



In recent years, the number of anglers wishing to spend their precious vacation time in the salt has risen dramatically. In response to this demand, many new lodges have opened hoping to cater to these adventuresome anglers. The choices are now greater than ever. On the downside, prices have skyrocketed as many lodge owners scramble to gain from the bonefishing boom. A seemingly endless stream of anglers willing to accept price increases without blinking an eye has enticed many of these lodges and some larger booking agencies to cater more and more to affluent anglers. Lodges have sought to provide every possible creature comfort from deluxe accommodations to five-star dining, while many booking agencies have focused their entire marketing efforts on these high-end experiences. For the dedicated angler, we see two dangers with this trend:

First, often these high-end lodges need to book 12-16 anglers per week in order to support the cash flow needs of bank loans and investors. These large numbers of anglers can often overwhelm the carrying capacity of a resource and the fishing can quickly begin to suffer. We feel that good fishing is our clients' first priority and no matter how good the food and lodging might be, without good fishing, these amenities mean nothing. While we have nothing against creature comforts, we do insist that the lodges we choose to book offer excellent <u>and</u> sustainable angling opportunities. To put it another way, the affluent angler does himself no good if he is seduced by the glossy and glitzy high-end places and ignores the smaller, but perhaps more productive locales. One of our more dedicated clients, who can afford to fish wherever he wishes, says:

"Hey, I go fishing to fish. I don't always want five-star dining and hors d'oeuvres on silver plates. I get plenty of that at home or on my business travels. What I do want is for my less affluent friends and my son to go with me. They can't afford the prices of these exclusive resorts. All we want is a good healthy meal, comfortable accommodations and good fishing... and I don't want so many other anglers buzzing around me all the time. I like remote fishing more than amenities... and I'd like to go three or four times a year instead of once or twice."

Our second objection to the marketing trend that promotes only high-end experiences as viable opportunities is that this approach (and the swelling prices) leaves many students, young professionals, guides, and fly shop owners out of the equation. For these anglers, spending $600 per day to bonefish is not an option – and they should not be lead to believe that they must commit to these prices in order to have good fishing. As previously stated, we like a great meal and deluxe accommodations as much as the next fellow. Again, we have absolutely nothing against luxury resorts as long as they offer a quality angling experience along with the amenities. We think these lodges are entirely appropriate for some anglers. We book many of these lodges now and we will continue to in the future. We just don't think it's good for the sport to see this trend towards <u>only</u> high-end experiences. We don't want to leave less affluent anglers behind. Students, guides and fly shop owners are the foot soldiers of our sport and as such, are key to providing the grassroot support that is essential to any out-island conservation or anti-netting effort.

So to the angler able to afford the best, we say, don't put on blinders and certainly don't be seduced by glossy brochures and expensive ads into believing that amenities *equal* good fishing. And to less affluent anglers, here is a list of angling opportunities that may require some sacrifices in the way of

BUDGET BONEFISH OPPORTUNITIES (CONT.)

creature comforts, but still offer great fishing at a very affordable price. All of these destinations offer very comfortable accommodations and good, if not gourmet, meals. We have also selected these spots because all offer extensive hard-bottomed flats and prolific fisheries... the two top priorities for most of our clients.

Some of these destinations are also appropriate for more affluent anglers who want to go more often during the year, put a mixed-income group together or provide an incentive program to employees.

Crooked Island, Scavella's Guesthouse

Crooked Island is the sister island to Acklins Island. This remote island in the southern Bahamas offers great opportunities to fish to large schools of 3-5lb. bones and frequent singles and doubles. Most of the island's beautiful white sand flats are hard-bottomed and easily waded. Crooked Island is a vast and pristine wilderness offering great bonefishing and enough permit and tarpon that we'll insist you pack the appropriate gear.

Accommodations are in the form of a newly-remodeled, air-conditioned guesthouse. Delicious home-cooked meals are served near-by at a local restaurant. Guides use new boats with 115 hp Yamaha motors and trim tabs to swiftly carry you to the best flats despite prevailing conditions and the amount of chop encountered. At only $1,850.00 per week, per person, double occupancy, this trip is a great value and offers anglers an opportunity to fish this remote area at a very affordable price.

Acklins Island, Grey's Point Bonefish Inn

Acklins Island is known for both its prolific bonefishery and its extensive hard-bottomed flats. Grey's Point has the best out-the-front-door fishing available anywhere in the Bahamas. Last year, Grey's Point completed their new lodge and put the final touches on six new air-conditioned rooms and now offers amenities surprising, especially considering their remote location.

At our suggestion, Grey's Point is offering a budget alternative for those anglers seeking more affordable opportunities. While a fully guided week costs $2,350.00, anglers can now opt to spend 7 nights with 6 days fishing including two days fully guided for only $1,850.00 per person. The extensive flats 100 yards from your room ensures you'll fish dawn to dusk…no matter what amount of guiding you choose.

South Andros Island, Kemp's Bay Bonefish Club

South Andros is famous for protected creeks, hard-bottomed white sand flats and lots of bonefish. Deep Creek, Little Creek, Grassy Creek and the incredible south end of the island are legendary areas and yet, only a small portion of a vast wilderness that teems with thousands of bonefish. Our base of operation is a beautiful small lodge located on the best beach on the south island. Great guides use new boats and motors while wonderful food and comfortable accommodations round out a first-class operation. With Kemp's Bay, you'll feel like you've rented your own home and you'll get to fish the best of the best on South Andros for only $1,850.00 per week, per person, double occupancy. Weeks run Sunday to Sunday.

Long Island, Deadman's Cay

This large area of white sand flats, hidden creeks and pale turquoise channels is perfect for anglers seeking lots of shots at bonefish. Guests stay at a small hotel with newly remodeled, air-conditioned rooms. The owner prides himself on the delicious Bahamian food he serves his guests including many out-island seafood favorites. This may be a budget vacation, but Long Island is known for its topnotch angling opportunities and may be the best spot in the Bahamas if you love to wade-fish. This lodge will make sure you get to experience the best that Long Island has to offer. At $1,795.00 for a fully guided week, this price is tough to beat!

Mayaguana Island, Unguided Canoe Exploration

Ever heard of this island?… Probably not! Mayaguana Island has been fished by only a handful of anglers and this island is so remote that no guides are available for hire on the island. As a result, this is an unguided trip that uses quiet canoes to reach extensive hard-bottomed flats teeming with very inexperienced bones.

A comfortable, small hotel offers air-conditioned accommodations, great food and daily transport to the flats. An on-site American host/manager ensures you'll get to the right spot and is there to coordinate all daily activities. If you wish, fish from dawn to dusk and maximize your fishing budget. If you can see fish, like to wade, are in relatively good shape and don't need the assistance of a guide, this is the trip for you. At $1,995.00 per week, per person, double occupancy, Mayaguana Island offers as many quality shots at fish as you'd expect at more well known destinations.

AND ALSO OF INTEREST...

Here in Wyoming, the days are stretching out and we're getting some much needed spring snowstorms. Predictably, our thoughts are beginning to turn to trout fishing, but until we completely switch over, we're still planning on jamming in a few saltwater trips this spring! If you're torn like us, here's some news from around the world that should whet both your fresh and saltwater appetite!

Matt and Keri McMeans have spent this winter renovating their classic farmhouse at the Kingfisher Lodge on the Bighorn River. This cottage is perfect for intact groups of anglers who want to stay together in a cozy small house and fish the famous Bighorn with its stunning 5000 trout per mile. If you've never fished the Bighorn River, this should be your year to experience this must-do destination.

The folks at Flatiron Troutfitters in the Cloud Peak Wilderness Area of northern Wyoming are set to host intrepid anglers on their week-long horsepack adventures. The view from the base camp is magnificent and the camp is centrally located for some of the best dry fly fishing in the Big Horns.

Near Helena, Montana, Mike Geary and his Lewis & Clark Outfitters still have a few spots open for their five-day float trips on the remote and very beautiful Smith River. Those that have done this trip will tell you that the fishing is excellent and the camp more than comfortable. Mike also has a lease on some private water that drains into the Smith and he can combine days on this stream with days on the prolific Missouri River for those anglers seeking a more conventional experience sans camping.

Here in our Wyoming backyard, we're in final negotiations for yet another exclusive lease on a great private ranch with access to portions of the Little Bighorn River. This stretch of river sees only a handful of anglers each year and is one of our favorite spots to spend an afternoon off work! When combined with our other private leases on Goose Creek, Clear Creek and on the Powder River, this new lease offers yet another classic ranch for you to fish at the foot of the beautiful Big Horn Mountains.

Four hours west of Anchorage, Alaska the folks that pioneered the fishing on the stunning Kamchatka Peninsula will be outfitting trips again this summer. They have expanded their operation to include an incredible float trip on a remote small river loaded with large rainbows. We're headed over this summer to float this river, so expect a full report in our fall newsletter.

In the Bahamas, we're looking into reports of a small guesthouse on the northern end of Abaco Island. Tangelo Wood is remote and near some fine opportunities on very unpressured bonefish flats. More on this later!

While at the southwestern end of Abaco Island, Ricardo and Monique Burrows have continued to do an excellent job at Rickmon's Bonefish Lodge in Sandy Point. Great guides, big bones and a beautiful lodge have translated to a steady stream of glowing reports from returning anglers.

Over on Grand Bahama Island, Greg Vincent at Pelican Bay is now offering guests the option of taking private air charters from Freeport over to the remote Berry Islands where they can fish for two days and overnight at a small comfortable lodge on Chub Cay as part of their stay. This is a great idea and offers anglers a chance to fish the beautiful and lightly pressured Berry Islands while non-anglers enjoy the comforts and amenities of the Pelican Bay Hotel.

On South Andros Island, Tiamo Resort has been a shining example of blending resource management with quality bonefishing. The owners are providing great access to the West Side through the South Bight out of their beautiful lodge that is located right on the beach. This spot has been a sure winner !

Flamingo Bay on the west side of Andros may be a bit pricey, but for those who can afford it, this new lodge offers the best bonefish and tarpon opportunities on the legendary west side. For years, we have fished the west side with great results, but the problem has been easy access. Flamingo Bay has solved this by providing air access to their very comfortable cabanas, Hell's Bay skiffs, and four star cuisine. Call us for all the details!

Last May, we did an exploratory trip to Great Inagua Island in the southern Bahamas with great results. Guide Ezzard Cartwright, explores possibly the best tarpon fishery in all the Bahamas. We highly recommend this fishery for those anglers who want to get off the beaten path and experience some diversity while still having great bonefishing. Very comfortable lodging on the water accommodates only four anglers at a time. This is a unique opportunity to explore a very remote island in the Bahamas.

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