



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

THE ANGLING REPORT

July 2010 Vol. 23, No. 7

DATELINE: NEW BRUNSWICK

Atlantic Salmon On-Site Report On That New Restigouche Lodge

(Editor Note: In the rarified world of high-end Atlantic salmon fishing, the Restigouche River on the border between New Brunswick and Quebec has been one of the most exclusive of fishing venues. With a few notable exceptions, such as Red Pine Camp which has recently gone private, unless you were lucky enough to inherit a membership in one of the clubs that control most of the river and its tributaries, or you lived long enough to work your way up a long waiting list, you fished the Restigouche by invitation only. In a spotlight report on New Brunswick on pages 3 to 5 of our March issue, we reported that a new fishing camp had opened on the river and was taking paying guests. Well, Managing Editor Tim Jones has now made a trek to New Brunswick to see this camp first hand and try for the big salmon that enter the Restigouche early in the season. Here's his report.)

In the past 25 years, I've been fortunate to fish many salmon rivers in Russia, Ireland and eastern Canada, some of them famous, many obscure. But try as I might, I'd never been able to wet a line in the Restigouche. Without personal or po-



litical connections, or very deep pockets, it just wasn't possible to get on good water there when the fish were likely to be in.

So, it's probably not surprising that I jumped at the chance last month to make an early visit to a

"new" Restigouche River Lodge that is now taking paying guests. The lodge, which was purchased in late 2008 by a syndicate of six men from New Jersey, New York and New England, quietly began taking guests in 2009 and is now fully open for business. The main contact person is Harry Huff, who owns Streams of Dreams Fly Shop (www.streamsofdreams.com). Tel. 201-934-1138. Cell: 201-788-3131). Harry, by the way, is a larger-than-life character, a former tree surgeon and absolutely fanatic angler. Good company in a salmon camp.

For those who know the Restigouche and its fishing establishments, the "new" lodge is actually the former Pointe du Jour Salmon Club, which was privately held and which only occasionally leased its facilities to well-connected outside individuals and groups.

The facility is not hard to reach. It's located in the settlement of Mann's Mountain, between the Upsalquitch and the Matapedia, two major tributaries of the Restigouche, just upstream of the town of Matapedia, Quebec, and not far from Campbellton, New Brunswick. This is within a day's drive of New York and Boston. Anglers from farther afield can fly commercial. The closest airport with commuter service is Presque Isle, Maine, a little over three hours away with the border crossing. US anglers should remember that a passport or passport card is now required for crossing into Canada and returning.

The camp consists of two log guest houses, one with three twin-bed bedrooms and one with two twin-bed bedrooms. Both have a living room with fireplace. There's also a small log-construction guide cottage set a bit apart, another house on a separate

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HOMEWATERS

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property nearby and the main lodge building, also log, with dining room, kitchen and sitting room with fireplace and large windows overlooking the river. The main lodge building has a beautiful screened porch with comfortable seating and a grand view of the home pool. The new owners have put in new plumbing, new roofs and new landscaping. All is perfectly comfortable and in keeping with a "traditional" Canadian salmon camp. They are continuing to upgrade the entire operation with new boats and new motors. It's clear they are in this for the long run. They have cell phone and WiFi service, though the WiFi was down during my entire three-day visit.

Breakfast is served at 8 am. The main meal of the day is taken in the afternoon, and a light dinner is served after dark when you return from fishing. Food in the camp was very good, with breakfasts made to order and all efforts made to accommodate any special dietary needs.

Most important to salmon anglers, the camp owns exclusive rights to about three miles of river - both banks and the river bottom between. At first glance, this water looks much like the Ponoï — wide, fairly featureless. It takes some time on the water to begin to "see" how the currents lay out and where the runs and likely holding areas are. They have a number of named pools: Englands, Scow Shed, Home,

Ledges, Poker. Most of these pools have several beats within them and there are smaller pockets of holding water between. With a full camp (10 anglers is normal but they could accommodate a private group of up to 14), there's plenty of water for everyone to fish without feeling crowded. There's also enough water for an occasional change of scenery.

Fishing here is traditionally done with two anglers and one guide in a long, stable, outboard-powered, wood-and-canvas canoe. These boats are both a visual treat and a pleasure to fish from. Typically, the guide will anchor at the top of a run, and the anglers, fishing alternately, will cover the water on both sides of the boat with gradually lengthening casts as far as they can fish comfortably. The guide then drops the boat to new water. I fished with two different guides: Gerrie, who has guided here for more than 30 years; and Deering, who is also the camp manager. Both were competent and personable. The other guides I talked to also seemed to know the river and how to unlock its secrets for visiting anglers.

I generally prefer wading to fishing from boats and my guides were happy to accommodate with a mix of both. Since I was fishing alone with my guide, this was no problem. However, due to a quirk of New Brunswick law, when two anglers are assigned to one guide, both anglers must wade or



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gram on our website. Click on FREE 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@anglingreport.com. Our new Honor Roll subscribers this month are **John and Chrissie Jackson** who sent us the report on tarpon fishing in Sierra Leone that appears in this issue. You can find the complete list of Honor Roll subscribers on our web site, www.anglingreport.com.

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both must fish from the boat. The guide can't legally let one angler wade while taking the other in the boat.

Speaking of quirks of the law: In New Brunswick, anglers cannot fish on their own, even in the Home Pool, unless there's a guide directly supervising. Fortunately, if the standard camp schedule fishing 9 am to 12:30 pm and again from 5 pm until dark is not enough for you, the guides here seemed very willing to extend their hours, especially if an appropriate tip is forthcoming.

I arrived in late May when the first (and often largest) salmon of the season were just entering the river. A pair of 30-pounders had been taken in the lower river in the days before I visited. During my visit, the water was lower and clearer than you would expect at that time of year. There were fish entering the river each day and we could occasionally see them on a lie and cast to them. I clearly saw one fish I would estimate in the high 20-pound range, several I would guess were in the low 20s and nothing smaller. The river does get a grilse run in late June and early July.

None of the fish were inclined to move to my presentations — a situation experienced salmon anglers will understand. In three days of fishing, I had one fish swirl well behind my fly but it never came back to take. Harry Huff, who was fishing in a separate boat, rose two fish, both more aggressive than mine, but he didn't hook either. That's salmon fishing.

Given that most of the fishing is from boats here, a single-handed 8-weight or 9-weight rod is adequate. However, the wind was brisk while I was there and the fish I saw were large, so I used two-handed rods almost exclusively. While wading in Poker, I found it necessary to cast 90 feet to reach the lies and then mend the line to control the swing of the fly in conflicting currents. A 15-foot 10-weight was ideal for this. Most of the time, however, a 12-foot 8-weight was easier to handle. I also had a 9-foot 8-weight with a floating line and a

Bomber ready to go in the canoe in case a fish showed any interest in a surface presentation. Sadly, none did.

The Restigouche can be a bit deceptive. This is a powerful river and the currents are often far heavier than they initially appear. I would recommend bringing sink-tip lines or, at least, sinking leaders in addition to floating lines, especially early in the season.

Since I visited, things have apparently begun to pick up. For what's happening now, visit their blog at www.restigouchelodge.com/blog.php

At this writing, the camp still has slots available for this season, including some prime time in late July. Prime slots are priced at \$4,450 per week, plus 13% tax, which is very



reasonable for a river with the Restigouche's reputation. In August and September, prices go down to \$2,995, plus tax. My guess is that prime weeks will sell out quickly now that word is getting out and it may soon be necessary (as is typical on other salmon rivers) to work your way into a prime slot through repeat visits. Enjoy! — *Tim Jones, Managing Editor.*

US WEST

Trip-Planning File **Great Western Fishing Opportunities: Part II**

(Editor Note: Last month, Honor Roll Subscriber and frequent correspondent Bob Peters filed part I of this report on unusual and particularly noteworthy fishing oppor-

tunities around the western United States that are being actively booked by major booking agents. This month he continues along the same lines but he confines his attention to Orvis Endorsed properties and properties booked by Frontiers Travel. There are, of course, many other great properties that do their own booking or work with other agents. What we would like to see from subscribers is a wave of reports on places we have overlooked in this two-part series. To that end, we have decided to make three spots on our subscriber Honor Roll available to the first subscribers who file useful and detailed reports on Western fishing opportunities that are appropriate for Angling Report subscribers. We're eager to hear from you! See page 2 for more details on our Subscriber Honor Roll.)

Since my June report on western fishing opportunities went to press, the Western United States, particularly the more northern states, has experienced nearly non-stop cold and rainy weather. As I write this in early June, flood watches and warnings are posted in Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and in my home state of Wyoming. Take heart though. All that water should translate into excellent stream flows across most of the region well into summer and fall. Good stream flows are the most important ingredient in a good fishing season, so this may be the right year to fish the American West.

First up this month is Three Rivers Ranch (www.threeriversranch.com), on the Warm River near its confluence with the Henry's Fork of the Snake, just outside Ashton, Idaho. Mike Fitzgerald, Jr. of Frontiers Travel (800-242-1950; www.frontierstravel.com) gives this lodge and its owner, Lonnie Allen, a glowing recommendation. Lonnie's love of the ranch really comes through in any conversation with her, I found. Three Rivers Ranch has been serving anglers for 35 years. Lonnie's grandparents homesteaded the property, and she has now brought her two sons into the operation. Most of the guides have worked with Three Rivers for decades and their chef has been serving gourmet fare for 25 years.

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This corner of Idaho provides wade- and float-fishing opportunities on some of the most storied trout streams in America, including the Henry's Fork of the Snake and the South Fork. Three Rivers offers an elegant overnight float on the latter stream, by the way. The tents used have wood floors, and the amenities provided include cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the evening before a hearty meal. Three Rivers Ranch guests can also fish a variety of lesser-known waters in Idaho, Montana and even Yellowstone National Park. Additionally, the ranch has private access to nearly six miles of Robinson Creek, a freestone stream that joins Warm River right at the ranch. Lonnie tells me that there is seldom a day in their season (normally the third week of May to the third week of October) when anglers can't catch fish on dry flies here. Activities for non-anglers include horseback riding, mountain-bike riding, hiking and sightseeing in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National parks.

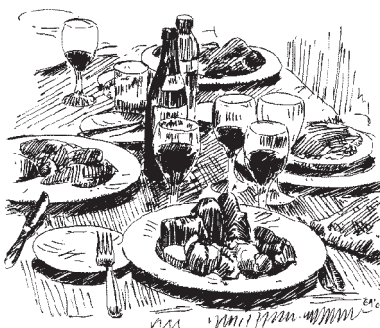
The second property I looked into this month – Clearwater Lodge – was recommended to me by Tom Evenson, Western Director of Orvis Endorsed Lodges, Outfitters, and Guides (www.orvis.com). Located between the volcanic peaks of Mount Shasta and Mount Lassen, Evenson says Clearwater Lodge (www.clearwaterlodge.com) offers the most extensive fly fishing program in all of northern California.

The managers of Clearwater Lodge are Bill and Vanessa Downs. In a phone follow-up, Vanessa told me the area's prime attraction is the variety of fishing it offers – everything from fishing in rivers... to streams... to spring creeks... to stillwaters. The Pit River, a tailwater freestone stream, runs through the lodge property and offers wade fishing with high catch rates. Nearby Fall River (which Vanessa tells me is the largest spring creek system in America) is a wide, slow-moving and crystal-clear river that has good fish populations and

abundant hatches. The dry-fly fishing available is very technical. Wild redband rainbow trout are the predominant species, with the occasional large brown showing up.

Vanessa shared a tidbit that really got my attention: There is usually a significant *Hexagenia* mayfly hatch from mid-June through mid-July in this area. These big bugs emerge from late in the evening until well after dark. Fishing the “hex” hatch here often involves casting in the dark to the sounds of feeding fish, she says. Apparently, hooking a big trout by feel on a completely blind cast is a life-changing experience.

As for the lodge itself, it elicits a “Wow!” from first-time guests. Artisan-built in the 1920s in the Grand Lodge style, Clearwater Lodge is



comfortably situated in a park-like setting on 43 acres. They offer fly fishing schools here throughout the season pitched toward everyone from beginners to advanced anglers. The latter are offered what they call “Master Angler” classes. Non-angler activities include hiking, kayaking, hot springs, birding and trips to nearby Lassen Volcanic National Park. You can reach Vanessa at: 888-600-5451. E-mail: info@clearwaterlodge.com.

The third property in the lime-light this month is another one we heard about from Evenson at Orvis. This one is Rawah Guest Ranch (www.rawah.com) in northern Colorado. Pat Timmins, who owns and operates the ranch along with his wife, Melanie, tells me Rawah (pronounced RAY-wah) is located at 8,400 feet in a

“forgotten-corner” of Colorado. It's situated on the west slope of the Front Range, 2½ hours from Denver International Airport.

In operation since 1952, the ranch controls nearly 18 miles of the Big Laramie River as it flows out of Colorado and into southern Wyoming. This is mostly wade fishing to deep pools, cutbanks, riffles and bends. The season runs from around May 1 through October 30, with hatches of blue wing olives in May progressing through stoneflies, drakes, and caddis. You could hear Pat's excitement as he described the hopper/dropper fishing in August and September on these meadow streams. The ranch property is adjacent to the 27,000-acre Rawah Wilderness Area, and guests can ride horseback to several mountain lakes that rarely see anglers. Most of the fishing is for browns and rainbows, although several locations offer good-sized brook trout. There's also a small lake accessible by a short hike where it's possible to catch native Colorado Greenback cutthroat trout, plus a nearby stillwater fishery with grayling. These latter waters make it possible for anglers to take a “Rawah Super Slam” – a brown, brook, rainbow and cutthroat trout, plus a grayling.

Rawah Ranch guests can also hike, ride mountain bikes and horseback in the mountains. The lodge features fine ranch cooking, a recreation room and even occasional square dances for guests who aren't too worn out to take part in them. Pat's passion and enthusiasm for his property are infectious and I really want to visit. He can be reached at: 800-820-3152. E-mail: rawahranch@aol.com.

Still in Colorado, Mike Fitzgerald, Jr. of Frontiers Travel recommended the very upscale 3 Forks Lodge and Spa (www.threeforksranch.com) near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. This is a top-shelf lodge on a 200,000-acre working ranch, Fitzgerald says, noting it calls itself “The World's Only Five Billion Star Resort.”

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The fishing priority here is 16 private miles of the Little Snake River. In 1999, the ranch embarked on what became the largest privately-funded stream restoration project in America. The owners installed more than 2,400 plunge-pool structures and the river is now a completely self-sustaining natural fishery. Anglers are assigned a different beat each morning and afternoon, ensuring that every angler fishes “fresh” sections of the river. The fishing is mostly dry fly or dry-and-dropper, with mayfly, stonefly or caddis hatches going throughout the season from early June into October. The ranch has many hay meadows, so the hopper fishing is prime in late summer.

3 Forks Lodge and Spa is all-inclusive: fishing, meals, spa treatments, food, drinks, etc. are included in the package price. Right now, certain packages even include free airfare. Non-angling activities include hiking, bike or atv rides, horseback riding, spa treatments and sporting clays. The lodge also offers winter-time ski concierge services to Steamboat Resort. Starting next winter there will be snowcat skiing right on the ranch.

Frontiers Travel also gives a rave endorsement to Big Hole Lodge (www.flyfishinglodge.com), a beautiful river-rock and lodgepole-pine structure nestled along the Wise River in Montana. It is surrounded by the Beaverhead National Forest. Anglers fly into Butte and are picked up and driven to the lodge.

Owner Craig Fellin reeled off a veritable buffet of fishing options: floats on the Bitterroot and five different sections of the Big Hole River, one of Montana’s premier blue-ribbon brown and rainbow trout fisheries. You can expect hatches of mayflies, stoneflies, caddis and terrestrials throughout the season, he says. The lodge also has fishing rights on three miles of the Beaverhead River, access to a 20-acre lake and rights to fish on the private McCoy Spring Creek. They also do horseback day trips to

high alpine lakes surrounded by 10,000-foot peaks. The season stretches from early June through early October. Non-angler activities include tours of Bannack (the best-preserved ghost town in Montana), cycling, hiking, hot springs, horseback riding and even golf on a Jack Nicklaus course in Butte.

If your tastes run to a multi-day float trip on a legendary clearwater river through a majestic canyon, Tom Evenson of Orvis has two suggestions. The first is Deep Canyon Outfitters (www.deschutesflyfish.com) in central Oregon. This company offers up to four-night floats on the famous Deschutes River. I talked with Matt Shinderman, whose descriptions of the river and the canyon are sure to get you excited. Matt tells me that the



volcanic geology of the Deschutes basin promotes relatively stable flows of cold, clear water and prodigious bug hatches. Best-known are the salmon flies and golden stones, which typically hatch from mid-May to mid-June. Like other giant stonefly hatches around the West, these bring up big fish. The big fish here are native Deschutes “redside” rainbow trout, famous for their strength and acrobatics.

Stoneflies aren’t the only bug in town, however. There are mayfly and caddis hatches through the season, with great dry fly fishing extending on into October. The Deschutes also has a run of steelhead arriving in August and staying through the winter. Fall anglers can hook redside rainbows and their sea-going steelhead cousins in the same run.

Anglers travel 2 X 1 in aluminum driftboats while the “gear boat” hauls the camp staff and supplies for comfortable camps and great meals. Fishing from boats is not allowed, so anglers wade productive water. You can call Deep Canyon Outfitters at: 541-323-3007. Or you can e-mail them at: flyfishing@deschutesflyfish.com.

Finally, Orvis named the classic five-day float trip on the Smith River outside Helena in Montana with PRO Outfitters Montana (www.prooutfitters.com) as their 2010 Expedition of the Year. This is an outfit I’m familiar with, as several of my friends from Jackson Hole have done the Smith with PRO Outfitters many times and look forward to it every year.

I talked with Brandon Boedecker, who owns and operates PRO Outfitters with his wife, Katie. The Smith float covers 62 river miles and runs most years from mid-May through mid-July, depending on water conditions. The “money” hatch on the Smith is the hatch of salmonflies around the beginning of June. These giant stones turn big, wary trout into complete pushovers and the excitement is explosive. Again, though, there are plenty of other bugs that bring the fish up: brown and green drakes, evening caddis, hoppers and even cicadas. Brandon tells me the Smith is an ideal stream on which to teach/learn flyfishing because of the abundance of bugs and fish, and the forgiving nature of the water.

Anglers fish 2 X 1 from a driftboat with the guide rowing while the gear boats row downriver each day to set up the next camp. My friends tell me meals and hors d’oeuvres on this trip are amazing and the camps incredibly comfortable. Much of the river runs through a gorgeous canyon with limestone walls as high as 1,000 feet. Brandon’s practice is to switch guides/anglers from day to day so anglers learn subtle technique differences from each guide. Brandon and Katie can be reached at: 800-858-3497. E-mail: katie@prooutfitters.com. – Bob Peters.

DATELINE: AFRICA

News... News... News

A Big Tarpon Tale And More From Sierra Leone

(Editor Note: Angling Report subscriber and renowned sustainable-use conservationist John J. Jackson, III, weighed in this month with the following report about a giant tarpon his wife Chrissie just caught at Bonthe Holiday Village in Sierra Leone, West Africa. That success inspired the Jacksons to lay down the framework for a voluntary sustainable use conservation program to help conserve Silver King in that troubled corner of Africa. We think the program with its emphasis on voluntary contributions by traveling anglers deserves the careful attention of outfitters, agents and individual anglers the world over.)

My wife, Chrissie Jackson, just caught what should qualify as the IGFA Women's World Record tarpon, 80-pound line class, in Sierra Leone. We have already filed the application. On the certified scales maintained by Bonthe Holiday Village, the tarpon weighed 110 kilos (242 pounds, 8 ounces). Its length was eight feet eight inches, and it had a girth of 46 inches. It was caught in the entrance hole of Sherbro Island where the Sherbro and Kittman rivers enter the Atlantic. She fought the monstrous tarpon in the rain for approximately one hour out of a 17-foot Boston Whaler.

The big tarpon is Chrissie's third Women's World Record class game fish, although her two earlier fish have long been displaced. She once held the Women's 130-pound-class tarpon for a 187.8-pound tarpon taken in Louisiana, as well as the 16-pound-line class barracuda record taken in Gabon, west Africa.

The Sherbro Pass of Sierra Leone is the foremost record tarpon hole in the world. More IGFA record tarpon have been taken there than anywhere in the world, from 166 to 283 pounds. Though record entries come and fall, most current record-category entries are still from there. This is the first since 1997.

The facilities and tarpon fishing here waned during the recent war but are being built back up. This was our first trip there and one of the first by any seasoned tarpon anglers since the war. The Bonthe Holiday Village is located on the northeast inland corner of Sherbro Island. It is approximately 10 miles upriver from the pass. The Village is a fence-enclosed hotel made up of six immaculately clean rondavels that each have three separate quarters and baths. Those quarters share a large, common entry room. There is a separate dining, bar, kitchen building. It is clean, enclosed and secure. The central building had satellite TV, internet service and more than one computer for guests to use. Our cell phones worked at the camp. There was also a large, clean swim-



ming pool and outdoor bar but we did not find time to use them.

The food was exquisite and the bar was fully stocked. Although every room had a fan, it was hot. Joy Samake, the managing owner, has promised to air condition the sleeping quarters before next season.

There was a manned security gate at Bonthe Holiday Village, but the local people could not have been friendlier each time we walked in the surrounding town. Crime is non-existent. In fact, the locals were protective of us.

Chrissie and I decided to go to Sierra Leone because of the oil spill disaster in the Gulf. We fish the mouth of the Mississippi River for big tarpon quite often but we could not do so this year. We flew Continental Air-

lines from Houston to London Heathrow, then direct to Freetown, Sierra Leone, without having to overnight. Alternatively, we could have flown to Brussels, then on to Freetown on Brussels Airlines, which is how we chose to depart because of a meeting we had in Europe. If one is willing to overnight, one can also fly to Dakar, Senegal, then on to Freetown the next day. (Delta, Royal Air Morocco, Kenya Airlines.)

Our arrival at Lungi Airport across the river from Freetown was at 7 p.m. We had the option of spending the night at the Lungi Airport Hotel (an air conditioned hotel with restaurant and bar) or being transported by helicopter, ferry or shuttle vessels across to Freetown. We elected to stay at the Lungi Hotel that first night. The next morning we were escorted to a launch. From there, we motored down the coastline in a twin-outboard Sea Pro to the Bonthe Holiday Village on Serbro Island. The trip took two hours and 40 minutes. We had the options to take a bus for six hours or a helicopter or fixed-wing plane at much greater cost.

Bonthe on Serbro Island is very isolated. The pass where we fished greatly resembles Boca Grande, Florida, except there are no other boats save for an occasional passing dugout with local native people. It is a beautiful, isolated paradise for the adventurous.

The tarpon season is said to run from February through June, but locals informed us that it effectively ends around May 15. Chrissie's tarpon was the second we caught in six days, and we saw only about a half dozen more. I believe we missed the season by several weeks. Supposedly, the waters boil with bait (menhaden and mullet) during the height of the tarpon season in March and April and several tarpon can sometimes be caught within a day.

The fishing was slow, but Chrissie doggedly stuck with it. It was interrupted by an occasional large jack crevalle or giant barracuda. June is

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also the beginning of the rainy season and more turbulent seas, though most of the rain in the first month is at night and we welcomed the cloud cover in the day. When we left, the river was beginning to get dirty from the rain. Before that, the river was exceptionally clear for a tarpon river. June is too slow for all but die-hards and vacationers.

I realize most *Angling Report* subscribers are fly fishermen. Indeed, the water was clear enough for fly fishing. And we were told there is at least one ideal fly fishing area upriver. Chrissie and I did not give it a try because of the lateness of the season. There were just not enough fish in the river during our visit. Our fallback technique was to bottom fish with mullet on 16° circle hooks and 200-pound monofilament leader. We drifted with the current over holes just as in Boca Grande Pass in Florida. It is a half-mile-wide pass between two sand points with deep holes that one drifts over. We also drift fished beyond the pass in the Atlantic in 30 to 55 feet of clear water. We brought our own tackle, which I recommend at this time.

The website for the operators is www.bontheholidayvillage.com. The managing partner, a delightful and trustworthy businesswoman from Freetown, is Joy Samake. Her e-mail address is: samake.joy@gmail.com.

We fished out of various boats but preferred the 17 foot Boston Whalers. Several other boats were available, including two large Sea Pros and similar Carolina center-console skiffs. Some were equipped with fish-finding depth recorders and GPS and some were not. Next time, we may bring a portable model of each for assurance.

There is an important resource conflict here which we handled as tactfully as possible. The local people live at subsistence level. They eat tarpon. In fact, I videoed and photographed them butchering and dividing up Chrissie's world record tarpon, perhaps the first photographs of such an event. We also witnessed locals catch a giant tarpon, spear it at the

side of their dugout and bring it aboard. They are fishing and catching tarpon for food when perhaps they could benefit more by supporting catch-and-release tourist fishing of the sort that has been practiced so sustainably in Florida and elsewhere. Sherbro Pass is a unique tarpon hole for giants. It must be saved and the local people must be made the beneficiaries, guards and stewards of the Silver King. Consequently, my conservation organization called Conservation Force has instituted a program to conserve tarpon in partnership with the local village on the Pass and the Bonthe Holiday Village owners.

Conservation Force is a non-profit, public, US charitable foundation with offices in the US, Canada, Europe and Africa. Contributions to



Conservation Force are tax-deductible. We have wildlife projects based upon communal-based natural resource management (CBNRM) across the globe from Pakistan to southern Africa. We are members of the IUCN and its specialist group which specializes in sustainable use. On an experimental basis, we have initiated a program benefiting the Manai Village located on the shores of the Sherbro Island Pass.

Here is how it works. On a voluntary basis, tourist anglers are asked to donate \$100 US Dollars for every tarpon they catch and \$250 for every tarpon they land/kill. 100 percent of the proceeds received will go to the Manai Village. If the donation is made through Conservation Force, the donor will receive a written acknowledgment and it will be tax de-

ductible to those reporting income in the United States.

The payment can be viewed by the angler as payment in lieu of a license because Sierra Leone does not require a fishing license. Chrissie has begun the program with a donation of \$250 when her tarpon was taken. The Village Chief, Regional Chief and owners of the Bonthe Village have all agreed to the experimental program. Together, we can eliminate the subsistence killing of tarpon and greatly enrich and improve the living conditions of the local people that have the fate of the silver giants in their hands.

Sierra Leone may still be the capitol of the giant tarpon. It certainly is an isolated, unique fishing destination for the more serious tarpon fisherman. It is nice that English is so widely spoken and that the giants still exist. It will be wonderful if Conservation Force's program for the local people can help sustain and restore the resource, as well as benefit the local stakeholders and guardians.
— John J. Jackson, III.

(Postscript: You can learn more about Conservation Force and/or make a donation to the fledgling Silver King conservation effort in Sierra Leone by going to: www.conservationforce.org. The phone number is: 504-837-1233. Indeed, traveling anglers who frequent lodges and camps such as *Bonthe Holiday Village* need to step up to the plate and start voluntarily funding local conservation efforts. There is no effective government bureaucracy to help save fish in a country such as Sierra Leone. The same is true in parts of Nicaragua, Brazil, Mongolia and Bolivia, just to name a few countries. All that will save fish there is hard cash raised and distributed locally by fishing professionals who care about the future. Do you agree? Disagree? Do you want to get started? Weigh in by calling the agents and outfitters who help you fish in underdeveloped parts of the world. Weigh in, too, by sending your thoughts to: doncausey@anglingreport.com.)

Briefly Noted

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

■ Remember **La Zona**, that incredible hothouse fishery for golden dorado at a place called Salto Grande on the Uruguay River, which marks the boundary between Argentina and Uruguay? This fishery was jointly developed and popularized by an Argentinean named Marcelo Perez of Untamed Angling (www.untamedangling.com) and Mark Cowan of Pescador Solitario (www.remotelyfishing.com). Those two have gone separate ways, but La Zona has stayed in the limelight of international fishing, producing unreasonable numbers of outsize fish.

The huge popularity of this fishing combined with the limited access allowed (only four days of fishing per week by two boats based on the Argentinean side of the river) has pushed the price of a day of fishing here up to the \$1,000 mark. The shoe waiting to drop on this situation has been the possible allotment of another two fishing slots on the Uruguayan side of the river. And that is what has finally happened. Luis Brown, a successful outfitter of peacock bass fishing trips to the Amazon, has won approval to begin offering dorado trips at Salto Grande.

It is not clear at this point what Brown's overall marketing strategy will be, but he has certainly named J. W. Smith of Rod and Gun Resources in San Antonio, Texas, as an agent. You can reach J.W. at 800-211-4753. Web: www.rodgunresources.com. Here is how Smith described the new Luis Brown trips to La Zona:

"La Zona is perhaps the most exciting destination in the history of sport fishing, as it affords sight-casting to bright-gold fish that strike viciously, leap acrobatically, tear off line and leave your legs and arms shaken and wobbly. We have at long last received the very highly coveted permit to access this amazing fishery

from the Uruguayan side of the river, and we are now taking reservations for trips beginning mid-September through April 2011 - all prime dates to take big fish (ten to 50 pounds) and good numbers of them. We are limited by the regulations to two fishing boats (four to six anglers total) per week, fishing Monday through Thursday.

"There is tremendous interest in this program and the small group size will limit available dates. If you would like to experience this unique fishing opportunity, we ask that you contact our office very soon, as the calendar is already filling up. David Gregory, of our staff, has just returned from fishing off-season in cold, rainy,



windy weather. He still averaged 12 fish landed each day (with some lost), the largest weighing 38 pounds. The boats we have lined up are perfect for the location, as are the very knowledgeable guides. Accommodations are modern and very close to the boat launch. We have a dedicated website featuring this trip at: www.lazona-doradofishing.com...."

Smith gives the cost of this trip as \$4,250 for five nights, four fishing days, single occupancy. The wait-and-see question is whether that price can be maintained in the face of what amounts to a doubling of the number of openings. It well might be maintained, as this fishery is truly incred-

ible. If you go to La Zona with Brown, or with Marcelo Perez, do file a report. We are eager to hear how competent and knowledgeable the Luis Brown guides are. Perhaps more important we want an on-site report that describes how the two operators coordinate their activities below the dam. There are said to be some hard feelings between the two companies. The first angler to La Zona who files a detailed report on this situation is guaranteed a place on our Subscriber Honor Roll. See page 2 for details on our Honor Roll.

□

■ Speaking of Untamed Angling (www.untamedangling.com), that company continues to build on its success at La Zona. We've already told you about the company's new dorado operation in Bolivia (see subscriber reports No. 4080 and 4081), and its sea run brown trout operation in Tierra del Fuego (see Article Nos. 2301 and 2108). Well, Untamed Angling has now branched out to **Seychelles** where it has teamed up with Desroches Island Resort (www.desroches-island.com) to offer flats, reef and offshore fishing for bonefish, Indo-Pacific permit, various species of trevally, milkfish, triggerfish and a host of others species. Desroches is in a safe area, 143 miles southwest of Mahe. It is accessed by a 40-minute flight twice weekly that flies directly to the island's airstrip.

Bob Artzberger at Frontier's Travel (800-245-1950; www.frontierstravel.com) tells us his firm sent a handful of clients to Desroches last year, and the reports from those clients provided "...rave reviews of the fishing and the luxury accommodations on the island." The flats fishing from Desroches Island Resort centers on two atolls, he says, Poivre and St. Joseph. Clients typically spend three days fishing each. Both are some dis-

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tance from the main island and are accessed by boat daily, with anglers returning each night to the resort. An option to overnight on the boat was offered this past season but Frontiers has dropped that option. According to Artzberger, there's talk of building more flexibility into the program, allowing anglers to choose the days they want to fish rather than locking them into a full six-day fishing program. Only six anglers at a time can be accommodated.

The real draw at Desroches may turn out to be the resort's luxurious accommodations, endless beaches, loads of recreational activities and full spa options, along with its fishing. Desroches is sure to be viewed by some anglers as a near-perfect spot to bring a non-fishing spouse. Importantly, there are a couple of small flats right on Desroches, Artzberger says, and some nearby reefs that can be explored on your own by kayak.

The price for the 2011 season, which launches in October, is \$7,600 for anglers; \$3,900 for a non-fishing spouse. The package is all inclusive and includes accommodations, fishing, meals, roundtrip charter flight from Mahe and all house beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

(Postscript: If you book this trip, please file a report. A useful one will earn you a spot on our Subscriber Honor Roll. See page 2 for more information on our Honor Roll.)

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■ Are you still among the travelers who go fishing away from home without a **medical evacuation membership**? Well, here is a story that will help drive home how reckless your behavior is. Seems the medical evacuation company we support, Global Rescue, has just evacuated a sportsman from the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia. No, the member was not fishing in that wilderness; he was hunting. But that's a distinction without a difference. The sportsman in question severely injured his leg many miles from any kind of medical help. He urgently

needed immediate care.

If you've fished the Kamchatka Peninsula, you have some idea what it costs members of a group to book a helicopter in that part of the world. Well, imagine what it would cost you as an individual to arrange for a helicopter. And consider what it would be like to enter a hospital in that part of the world, on your own, for some kind of emergency care.

The Global Rescue member in question was picked up in camp at no cost and flown to a hospital in Petropavlosk, where his care was carefully monitored by critical care paramedics in the Boston headquarters of Global Rescue and by specialists at Johns Hopkins Medicine. As soon as the hunter was stabilized and improved for travel, he was flown home. Along the way, he was joined by a



critical care paramedic, who accompanied him to his home hospital of choice. He is recovering nicely.

A leg injury not scary enough to stampede you toward the conclusion that it is dangerous and foolish to travel without medical evacuation coverage? Well, note the other evacuation Global Rescue performed for a sportsman recently. It involved a member and his wife who were on safari in Botswana. Mid-safari, the hunter developed a severe cough. Here is how the Mission Summary describes what happened next: "He visited a local clinic where he was diagnosed with bronchitis, his coughing worsened and he became short of breath. His safari guide called Global Rescue for help. Global Rescue's medical staff obtained the member's

test results, suggested he be evaluated for congestive heart failure after reviewing his medical history, and recommended a medical evacuation from the camp. Global Rescue immediately launched a medically equipped aircraft to evacuate the member, who was transported from a remote landing strip to Johannesburg, the location of the best cardiology unit on the continent. There, he was diagnosed with congestive heart failure, and the local surgeons and Global Rescue physicians agreed he would require immediate bypass surgery. Global Rescue deployed a medical team to his bedside to oversee and coordinate his treatment. After a lengthy and complicated procedure and post-operative rehabilitation that saved his life, the man and his wife were transported home to Texas."

You can find out more about Global Rescue on the Angling Report web site at: <http://www.globalrescue.com/AnglingReport/>. Or you can probably ask your booking agent or outfitter about Global Rescue, since most of the important players are now Global Rescue Affinity Partners. The companies offering Global Rescue include: Acute Angling, Adventure Travel Alliance, Amazon Fishing Adventures Turismo, Angling Destinations, B & B Worldwide Fishing Adventures, Cabelas, Castafly Travel, Emerald Water Anglers, Fishabout, Fish Quest, Fish With Me, Fishin' Expeditions, Fishing With Larry, The Fly Shop, FlyCastaway, Frontiers, Fly Water Travel, Hanover Fly Fishers, Hydrus Expeditions, International Angling, Life of the Fly Outfitters, Nervous Waters, Salt Patrol Co., Slipstream Angling, Sportfishing Worldwide, Sweetwater Travel, The Trout Shop, Wild On The Fly and Yellowdog Fly Fishing.

In addition to the above agents, Wollaston Lake Lodge in northern Saskatchewan strongly recommends that all clients purchase a Global Rescue membership before travel. Even more significant, two major angling companies, Deneki Outdoors, (which

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operates in Chile, The Bahamas, Alaska and British Columbia) and Amazon Agency Corporation (which runs Agua Boa Amazon Lodge) purchase Global Rescue memberships for all of their clients. Global Rescue is getting inquiries from other fishing lodges around the world about this kind of blanket coverage for all clients. Short-term memberships cost as little as \$119 a week.

If your agent or lodge is not mentioned here and/or he or she does not make a point of offering you medical evacuation protection before you travel, you may want to ask why, as medical evacuation is emerging as one of those imperatives that all smart travelers sign up for. Even the US State Department now recommends that all travelers arm themselves with medical evacuation protection.

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■ Last month's front-page report on the growing interest in **kayak fishing** inspired subscriber Robert Smaldone to drop us this note: "Just read your report on kayaks and thought you may want to check out Wavewalk Kayaks (781-806-5261; www.wavewalk.com), which is based in Sharon, Massachusetts just outside Boston. The design of their kayaks is unique. They have a patented 'W' hull, much like a catamaran, and their web site is entertaining, especially all the videos.

"After researching and trying out both the Freedomhawk and the Native Watercraft 'Ultimate 12' fishing kayaks, I purchased a Wavewalk for fishing stripers and blues in Maine and

tarpon and reds in Florida. In my mind, this is truly the only standup kayak out there. You actually walk onto it, sit down and paddle away. I was standing and jumping, trying to simulate one of the videos; no other kayak has this kind of stability. It's a fly fisherman's dream, period...."

Also, since our report appeared last month, still another "stand-up" fishing kayak (actually a large, apparently stable, paddle-board with a raised seat/casting platform) has come to our attention. It's the Flatstalker



(512-217-0438; www.flatstalker.com/home), which the designers call a "Micro flats skiff." Company headquarters are in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Flatstalker will accommodate an electric trolling motor.

If anyone has actually tried these, or any of the other fishing kayaks on the market, send us a report of what it's like to fish from them. If we get enough response we'll create a special forum on our website.

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■ Down in **Chile**, we have news that

Derek Botchford and Mike VanWormer, owner/operators of Frontier Farwest Lodge on the Bulkley River in British Columbia have acquired and reopened Rio Palena Lodge in region 10 of Patagonia Chile. Rio Palena Lodge has been closed for the past 10 years. You can contact them at 877-846-9153. The lodge's web address is: www.riopalena.com.

Together, Botchford and VanWormer have an extensive resume in the fishing business, having operated or managed Alaska Rainbow Lodge for 11 years, and The Fly Shop/Wild Salmon Rivers programs in Kamchatka for eight years. Both have guided extensively in Alaska, Kamchatka, Chile, Argentina, the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia. American Guide Matt Nagler, who is a resident of the Chilean town of Coyhique, will ramrod this program for them.

In addition to lodge-based fishing on the Palena, they'll offer day floats and wading trips to the Futaleafu, Yelcho, El Tigre and El Molito, plus overnight float trips on the Palena. Our only report on this lodge (see Report No. 2532) is from 2000. It's outdated and, frankly, less-than-enthusiastic about the fishing. It contrasts sharply with what VanWormer tells us about the fishing in the area. Does the report in our files contain old news? Is it just plain unfair? If you fish at this re-opened lodge this coming season, please file a report. An Honor Roll cap awaits the subscriber who gives us the real, detailed "skinny" on this destination.

● OUTFITTER CRITIQUES ●

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

(This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Fishing Trip Report Forms. Our policy on these forms is we publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received and exert no censorship. Agents, guides, lodge operators and/or outfitters who disagree with anything said about them in this section are free to submit a rebuttal. As a subscriber, you can help extend the reach of this program by filing a Fishing Trip Report Form yourself. You should have found one inside this issue of your newsletter. Alternately, you can file a report online by going to our website, www.anglingreport.com. Click on File A Report. For details on how to order printouts of Angler Network Reports, see page 2 of this issue.)

■ Steelhead fans, take note. Subscriber Bud Gore has filed a must-read report on a river in southeast **Alaska**

that offers 14 miles of fishable water near the town of Yakutat. The river – roughly midway between Anchorage

and Juneau – is the Situk River. Gore says he has fished the river four times now because it consistently produces

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incredible numbers of large, wild steelhead. His catches there include a 44-inch, 27-pound fish that he landed in 2009.

Gore tells us his most recent trip to the Situk was this past May. He fished with Aaron Shook (907-784-3153; www.hobofishing.com), who garners excellent ratings across the board. Gore describes Shook as "...the best guide I've had in over 18 years of fishing in Alaska. He trains the other guides who come to fish the Situk from the Portland area." In the winter, Shook fishes steelhead in the Pacific Northwest.

Gore says he stays at a place called Yakutat Lodge (www.yakutatlodge.com), which he describes as adequate but not luxurious. "It's in town, adjacent to the airport," he writes. "The food is reasonable with many choices. Breakfast is at 6, and that allows you to get on the river by 7:15, with take-out between 5 and 6 pm."

Gore says the fishing here is a combination of floating and wading gravel bars. Alternately, there is a streamside trail here that you can use to wade and fish seven miles of the river. He says the steelhead fishing on the Situk is usually prime from April 1 through May 21.

Gore says Alaska Fish and Game maintains a counting weir on the Situk, and last year it counted 12,500 steelhead returning to the ocean. During the prime time for steelhead, there are no other fish in the river, though a run of sockeyes begins after the steelhead depart, and silvers enter the river later in season.

Using 7-weight rods and floating lines to fish Aeropuffs, yarn balls and jig flies fished below an indicator, Gore reports he hooked approximately six to 10 fish per day in his five days of fishing, all of them "great fish." He says he landed at least 50 percent of the fish he hooked. "New fish enter the river on each incoming tide," he writes. "Plus you have 'winter' fish which come down into the river from Situk Lake."

The weather in April and May,

Gore writes, can range from brutal (sleet and rain) to bright sunshine and 50 degrees. He says the boats all have a propane heater, and you may need to use it. "Bright sunshine is the worst for fishing," Gore writes, noting that Shook is "willing to hit the water before the sun does if necessary."

Gore says he's headed back to Yakutat in September, taking his daughter for the silvers, which reportedly run from 12 to 22 pounds. He gives the cost of his most recent trip as \$2,600 for seven nights lodging and five days of guided fishing. He tells us that he flew from San Francisco on Alaska Airlines (www.alaskaair.com), which offers the best flights and service. "I made it to Yakutat via Seattle and Anchorage in one day of travel," he writes. "But I had to over-



night in Seattle on the way home." (*Postscript:* As this is written, a new lodging option is emerging in this area, Gore tells us. It's a new, eight-bedroom lodge right on the Situk River. A converted private home, it's slated to be called "Fanning's On The Bay," and it will be booked through Yakutat Lodge. If you stay here, or fish the river from another location, do file a report.)

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■ Subscriber John Euard checked in last month with a report on a fishing/general tourism trip to a country that is completely new to us – namely, **Uganda**. He spent 18 days there last July and has this to say about the experience:

"The first night of our trip we stayed in a hotel in Kampala, the

capital city. The next morning we departed early for Murchison Falls with a stop along the way at the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary in Nakasongola where we walked with an armed guide through the bush to see the rhinos. From there, we went on to Paraa Safari Lodge overlooking the Nile River. We fished three days there and caught a number of Nile Perch, including three over 100 pounds. The largest weighed 145 pounds. It took 22 minutes to land that largest fish. It was one of the largest fish landed that year. I have fished a lot of places and caught a lot of fish, but this fish was the hardest one of all to land.

"We fished with large baitfish on the bottom next to snags and fallen trees, using heavy tackle and line. You had to wait a while after the fish took the bait to set the hook or you would lose it. At first, it was hard to just sit there while the line was streaming out. It was an overall great experience, catching big fish and watching hippos, crocodiles, elephants and other animals roaming the bank.

"We then went on to Kibale Forest National Park and stayed at a place called Primate Lodge. The next day we tracked and found chimpanzees in the rain forest. We were told this forest has the highest number of primates in Africa. Our next stop was Semliki Valley, which is called the "Garden of Eden." Here, we stayed at place called Simliki Safari Lodge. There were a lot of animals around. To get there, you had to take a gravel road that winds into the mountains and features a number of 5,000-foot drop-offs. It was hair-raising.

"From there, we went to Queen Elizabeth National Park and stayed at Mweya Lodge. Here, we were lucky to see the rare lions that live in trees and only come down at night to feed. We then went on to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and stayed at Gorilla Forest Camp. Our first trek in search of gorillas saw us climbing 3,000 feet up a rainforest mountain with no success. The second day, we climbed in

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another place and found the gorillas. I have had many enjoyable experiences in my life but this topped them all. We watched the gorillas for a half hour (all the time allowed) and were amazed by their human-like actions. It was hard to leave them. We were very tired afterward, but the locals put on a dance and my wife danced with them.

"We then went to Lake Mburo National Park and stayed at Mihingo Lodge. This lodge is built on high rocks and each room is like a tree house. You can watch animals from your room. The last two days we stayed in Entebbe at the Windsor Lake Victoria Hotel. We fished both days on Lake Victoria and caught small Nile perch that weighed around 10 pounds. The lake is like an ocean and borders five countries.

"We booked our trip through Jon's Dive and Travel Services (Tel. 413-525-6660. Web: www.jonsdive.com). The cost was \$9,443.50 per person. All of the lodges we visited were first class in every way. The service provided was great. Our Ugandan guide, Ronnie, was the best of all. He made sure everything went smoothly. We have been to Africa three times and Uganda is the best for variety and beauty. — John Euard, EuardJ@aol.com.

(*Postscript:* If you go to Uganda, be sure and file a report. We are particularly interested in hearing from subscribers who try other methods of taking Nile perch in this country. Are they fly fishable in Uganda? Or do these fish tend to stay in water that's too deep for the long rod?)

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■ Subscriber Dan Adams is pleased with a bass-fishing trip he made this past April to Dream Lake Lodge (205-652-4545; www.dreamlakelodge.com) in **Alabama**. He says the fishing there is strictly catch-and-release on two man-made lakes stocked with Florida-strain largemouths. He says the two lakes are 77 acres and 50 acres in size. Both have bottom aerators to maintain water quality. The fishing is

from 14- to 21-foot bass boats powered by electric motors. Adams says his guide, Doug Oliver, was excellent.

The primary target is largemouth bass, but he says there are also abundant bream and Amur carp in the lakes. Adams says he fished exclusively with 6- and 7-weight fly rods, using everything from weedless topwater flies (Sneaky Pete's and frogs) to subsurface water dogs and gully worms. Despite a cold front which made the days too bright and cool for the fastest action on bass, Adams says he landed about 10 bass each day. The bream and carp stayed active, too, despite the cold front. The highlight of the trip, he says, was catching 30-pound Amurs on No. 12 cut back Muddler Minnows.

Overall, Adams recommends the



experience, calling Dream Lake an "extremely productive, superbly managed bass lake where the goal is to catch eight-pound-plus bass daily."

As for the lodging and staff, he rates those as excellent.

He cautions fellow subscribers that the fishing is probably better here in May and June than it was during his mid-April visit. He gives the all-in cost, including tips, as \$850 for two days.

□

■ Another subscriber has weighed in with a positive report on the self-outfitted fishing arranged on Acklins Island, **Bahamas**, by Vince Tobia of Cattaraugus Creek Outfitters (716-479-2327; www.cattarauguscreekoutfitters.com). The latest report is from subscriber Glen Colton who

based his trip this past February at Chester's Highway Inn Bonefish Lodge (www.chestershighwayinn.com). He writes:

"My friend Frank and I really enjoyed finding and catching bonefish on our own. We have used guides on other trips and we enjoy that as well, but it is not quite the same as doing it yourself.

"We fished hard in a number of different locations on a variety of flats, in varying weather and light conditions - all self-guided wade fishing utilizing notated maps provided by Tobia. The maps were very helpful to us in determining where to focus our efforts each day. Even with the maps, however, I should warn fellow subscribers that this experience is not for everyone. If you aren't an independent type, can't read the water to find and spot fish on your own, or aren't in shape for lots of wading, this is not the trip for you. Guides are available for an extra charge of \$400 per day. If I go again (and I would like to), I may want to hire a guide for a day or two to spend time on new water.

"One of our problems was weather. We had strong east winds a few days and then strong west winds. We also had partly to mostly cloudy skies for several days, which made it tough to spot fish. The weather was chilly, too, and the water on some flats felt cool.

"On average, my friend and I each caught two or three bonefish a day. Interestingly, we spoke with some guided anglers whose success rate pretty much mirrored our own. In some locations, we found large schools of small fish and were able to catch several. On other days, we caught larger fish that were either singles or in small groups. The biggest bonefish we caught were about 25 inches long.

"We also saw some large barracuda which we targeted with a "Kudalicious" fly on a 10-weight. Whenever we got this fly in front of a barracuda, he went after it. I managed to hook one

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very large 'cudas that proceeded to break off when my line got wrapped around my rod butt. We also saw several rather large permit in a couple of locations, but didn't get good shots at them.

"Our go-to bonefish fly was a 'Squimp' pattern that we had previously used in the Yucatan. A lot of our fishing was in skinny water, so we needed a light fly that hit the water softly. We also utilized Clousers in deeper water, some small crab pat-

terns and pink puffs. I don't think the exact pattern mattered as much as the weight of the fly.

"All considered this was a great trip. It was fun to explore a secluded island with few residents and few other anglers. We were able to get away from the cold and snow of Colorado, catch a few large bonefish, and the price (\$1,500 for room, food, truck and bike rental) was very reasonable."

(Postscript: This is the third positive

report we've received on self-outfitted trips to this destination arranged by Vince Tobia. See Article No. 2285 and Report Nos. 4017 and 3632 in our database. As regards Chester's Highway Inn, by the way, Colton tells us he thoroughly enjoyed staying there. "The owners, Arnette and Julius Chisholm, were wonderful hosts, and the lodging, food, and hospitality were outstanding. It was fun to eat breakfast overlooking the flat in front of the lodge."

□ And Finally....

Three Subscriber Reports On Jurassic Lake

(Editor Note: Some destinations burst onto the world angling scene like fireworks – and fade out just as quickly. Lago Strobel (Jurassic Lake) in Argentina appeared to be that kind of fishery when it exploded onto the scene in 2008. The place just seemed to be too good to be true. Then subsequent stories rolled in about how hard it was to reach the lake and maintain accommodations there. The place certainly seemed to be headed toward the dustbin of angling history. But hold on! In recent weeks, we have received three fresh reports on Jurassic Lake, all of them describing experiences in the 2010 season. The first is from Honor Roll subscriber Bill Taylor who fished there with Erik Argotti at Estancia Laguna Verde (E-mail: erikargotti@yahoo.com. Web: www.estancialagunaverde.com). The other two are from subscribers Gar Jeffers and Med Peck who stayed at the Loop Adventures (www.loopadventures.com) safari-style tent camp on the shore of Lago Strobel near the mouth of the Rio Barrancoso. They booked their trips through Fly Water Travel (541-488-7160; www.flywatertravel.com). Maybe this area is here to stay after all?)

Honor Roll Subscriber Bill Taylor writes: I fished Lago Strobel this past February with Erik Argotti at Estancia Laguna Verde and came away with an understanding why this lake is nicknamed "Jurassic Lake". This place is, quite simply, as remote and wild as it gets, and the rainbow trout here are huge. As other subscribers have pointed out, no one just happens by Jurassic Lake – you work to get there. Starting from the nearest commercial airport in El Calafate (where I was met

by an employee of Estancia Laguna Verde), Strobel is a 5½-hour drive north. The last two hours is a 10-kilometer crawl over a boulder-strewn trail.

The lodge sits on the shoreline of a small lake with a half-dozen more lakes (or *lagunas*) between the lodge and Lago Strobel. Because of the circular shape of these lagoons (all of which hold trout, I was told) and the severe, vertical rock walls that sur-



round them, I theorized that they must have been formed by the impact of meteors or asteroids (back in the Jurassic Age?).

The lodge is owned by five Argentine businessmen. Renovated and expanded in 2009 to comfortably accommodate four to six rods, it has three double bedrooms with modern ensuite baths, a kitchen and a large living/dining area with a well-stocked open bar, a small fly shop, WiFi and a flat-screen satellite TV.

The entrance foyer serves as a drying room for waders and boots. There are separate quarters for three guides and the kitchen and maintenance staff. I was impressed by the quality, sophistication and variety of the meals produced by the kitchen staff and the selection of fine Argentine wines at this very remote lodge.

The southern shore of Lago Strobel and the mouth of its tributary, the Rio Barrancoso, are only five kilometers from the lodge but the trip there takes upwards of an hour due to the severity of the rocky, treeless terrain. You first drive to the rim of the encircling rock wall 100 feet or more above the lake. Then you hike down a steep, switch-back trail. There, you transfer to a Honda 650 Quad ATV for the remaining 10-minute ride to the lake's shoreline. Although I'm an old guy, I'm reasonably fit and didn't have any problems getting to and from the fishing (going back up the trail was the worst part), but those with physical limitations or respiratory problems should be forewarned that it can be challenging.

Lago Strobel is huge (11,000 acres), sky-blue, crystal-clear and very cold. This is not a spot for wet wading. Even in summer, when it is mostly sunny, passing clouds bring sleet and snow showers. You will need fleece and gloves here.

The potential fishing area is vast,

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but because of the heavy winds off the high mesa to the west and south, most of my fishing was limited to a wind-protected bay where the lodge has constructed a simple shelter that serves as a lunch and rest spot. On calm days, sight fishing should be possible, but all of my fishing involved wading knee deep along the sandy shoreline and blind casting over grass beds and drop-offs.

In three days of fishing, I averaged about 12 fish per day, with several weighing more than 10 pounds. These were strong, fat, deep-bodied rainbow trout with chrome-like coloration similar to the steelhead of the Pacific Northwest. I brought my nine-foot 7-weight single-hand rod but was never tempted to use it. Instead, I used a 13-foot three-inch 7/8-weight two-handed rod with a floating Scandinavian shooting head. This was not too much rod for the fish and was very effective in the wind.

I fished with lead guide Brian Cavaleri, who also guides at Alagnak Lodge in Alaska. Brian knows his stuff and is fun to be with. My first day, he and I rode the ATV over to Rio Barrancoso, where I fished several pools and caught a nice rainbow. I'm told this small stream can be extremely productive, especially during the spring spawning run. Loop's camp is located at the mouth of the stream. I believe I was the only fisherman within 100 miles on this particular day. I wanted to return to the stream the next day, but overnight it rained/snowed on the mesa and thereafter the Barrancoso was an un-fishable, muddy, raging torrent.

The environment around Lago Strobel is harsh and desolate, but wildlife is abundant. I saw red fox, rhea, chinchilla, guanaco, jackrabbit, flamingo and abundant other bird life. I recommend Lago Strobel to hardy and adventurous anglers with enough casting skill to handle brisk, incessant wind. This is a fascinating, unique environment. For those lucky enough to be there on those special days when diminished winds permit

exploration and wider fishing options, this place is clearly rainbow trout nirvana. I want to go back on one of those special days!

Four nights accommodations at Estancia Laguna Verde, (including transportation to and from El Calafate and three days guided fishing, was \$2,400. I made my lodge reservation through Brian Hodges of *This Is Fly* magazine and Double Haul Travel (866-899-7008; www.doublehaultravel.com). - *Bill Taylor*.

□

Gar Jeffers writes: The drive in and out of the Loop Adventures camp on Jurassic Lake is widely known as the "drive to hell," but I found it tolerable and actually easier than I expected. We had terrific guides and staff in camp, very nice men, and they



did a fantastic job. The food was great considering where we were and the logistics of getting there. Of course, the Argentine wine was excellent.

The weather was cool and windy while I was there. Sometimes there were waves two to three feet high in the lake. They did not hinder fishing at all. The Rio Barrancoso had little or no wind, so the fishing there for very big rainbows was easy. We fished primarily by wading in the lake, however, though we also did some bank fishing.

Jurassic Lake offers unbelievable fishing. It is all that it is advertised to be and then some. I caught numerous rainbows, including 70 to 80 fish over 10 pounds. My largest weighed about 19 pounds. A member of our group caught one that weighed 22

pounds. I took my fish on 7- and 8-weight rods. Any fly will do, it seems. I used nothing but a large bead-headed prince nymph. It was lethal in both the lake and the river. Our group used many flies, however, and they all worked.

My trip cost about \$4,500 including tips, and I definitely recommend it. This was a great and unique experience: no competition, lots of big rainbows that fight like hell and a great staff. I have fished all over the world and this is the best fly fishing for rainbows that one could possibly imagine. - *Gar Jeffers*.

□

Med Peck writes: The fishing was slow my first two days at Jurassic Lake, probably due to there being no wind. It was also quite warm. Fortunately, the wind increased and the fishing improved the last three days. I caught five or six fish of 30 inches or better and lots and lots under the 30-inch mark. The highlight of the trip for me was taking 30-inch rainbows on No. 10 and No. 12 dry flies. The pattern didn't seem to matter.

I used 8-weight rods with both full floating and intermediate lines. Rio's Versitip lines worked great. Bring a stripping basket if you are going to use full sink or intermediate lines.

The camp and the guides were both excellent, and I recommend the experience. Rainbows of 30 inches or better are almost guaranteed. The total cost of my trip was \$4,880. - *Med Peck*.

(*Postscript:* Peck's comment about warm weather and slow fishing piqued our curiosity about ideal timing at Jurassic. Brian Gies at Fly Water Travel told us at press time that he generally tries to steer clients toward earlier and later in the season – that is, before Christmas or in late March and April. "The weather is likely to be colder then," says Gies "The fishing indeed seems to get hotter as the temperatures fall. When one of our groups was there, the diesel fuel in the trucks actually froze, and they had incredible fishing.")

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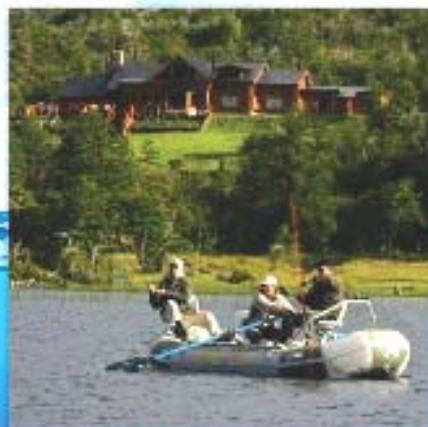
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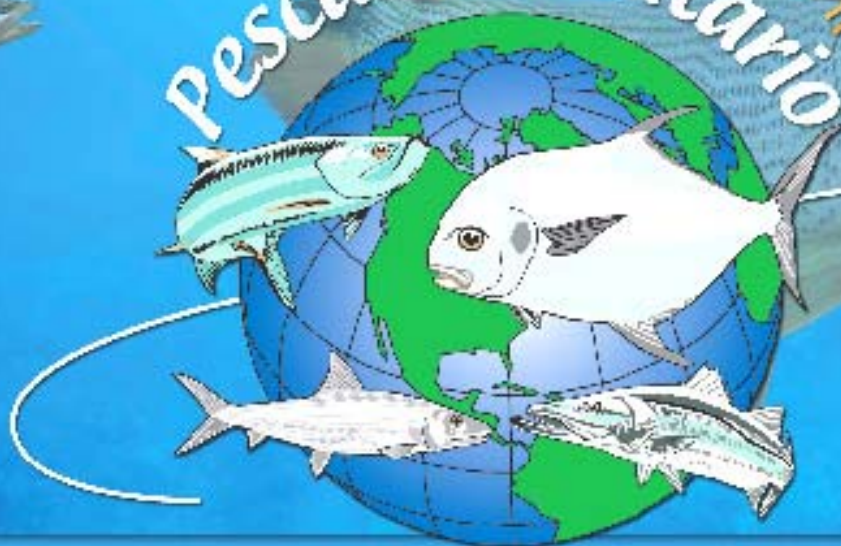
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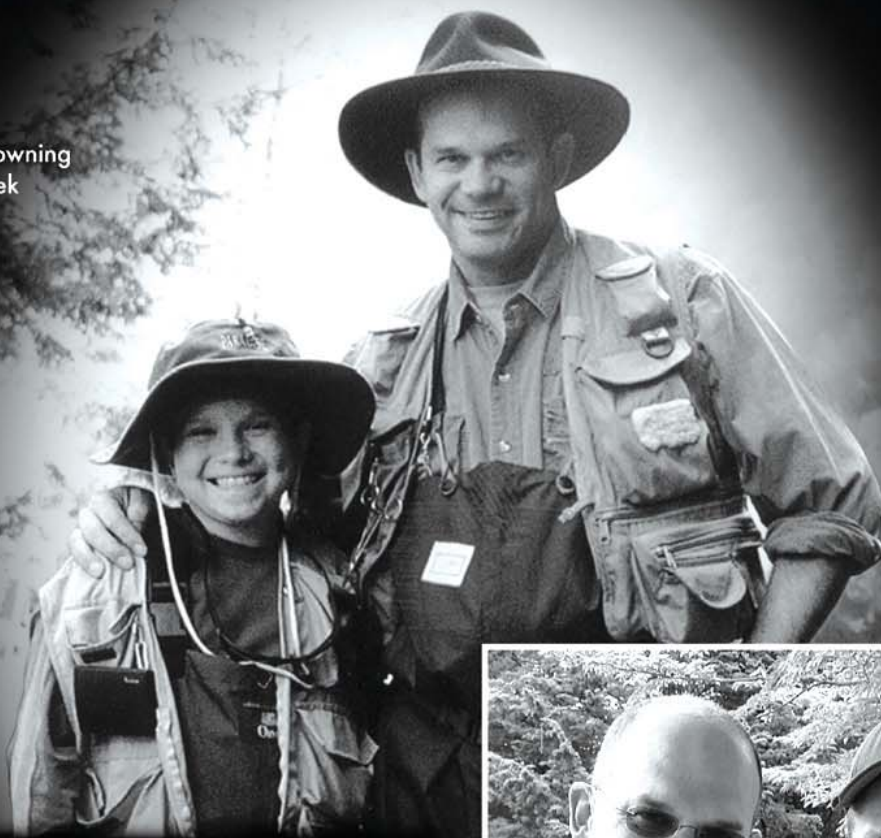
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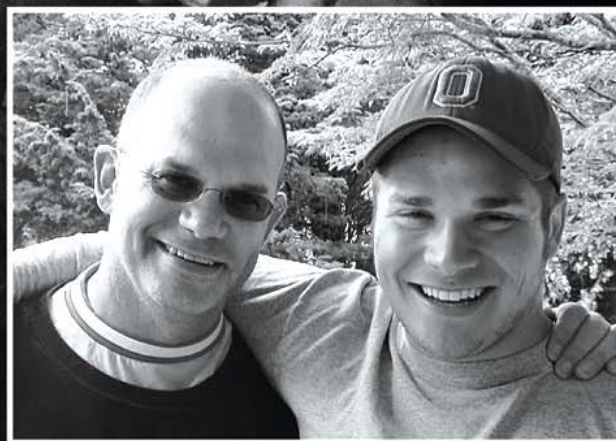
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