



# Aardvark McLeod

## NEWSLETTER

### Welcome...

After a particularly cold and dreary winter we are all looking forward to seeing the sun again. There has been a definite increase in those disappearing for a bonefishing excursion in the sun, despite the economic climate. It is going to be a tough season for many of the smaller operations around the world and we are already hearing of a number that are not going to open until things change in the market. There is a distinct lack of fishermen travelling from our cousins across the Atlantic which is translating into more prime space becoming available that we will be able to guide our clients into.

It has never been more important that those travelling can be assured that their money is protected by the appropriate bonding and liability insurances such as the ATOL bond and TOPP policy we have in place to ensure peace of mind.

This year will again be a busy one. I have just returned from yet another incredible trip to Los Roques, and have been exploring remote Atolls in the vicinity by live-aboard along with the offshore fishing possibilities to further expand their repertoire of species and experiences. It has reached another level now and with the exceptional value it now represents I feel it is only going to become more popular. I will be heading to Iceland in June to experience the outstanding new trout fishing we have available there as well as expanding my knowledge of some further rivers we are adding to our portfolio. I will then be leading a group to Mongolia in September to float down a new section of one of the rivers looking for giant taimen.



### Latin American Fishing Company joins Aardvark McLeod

We are delighted to announce that the team at the Latin American Fishing Company will be joining Aardvark McLeod.

The company will continue to trade under its own name but will now operate under our bond and administration will be handled within our offices. Nick Palliser, Gordon Richmond and Peter Gibson will be a welcome addition to the team and bring an incredible depth of knowledge of this area.

Charlotte has travelled to the Seychelles in February to gain first hand experience of all the new hotels and resorts now springing up to provide further add on options or combination trips there, and then she will be following me to Los Roques in May. Peter Baxendale will be leading his groups to the Acha Camp in Russia and Cayo Largo in Cuba, and we are also very pleased to announce that the Latin American Fishing Company will be joining the Aardvark McLeod group adding their unparalleled knowledge of unique tailor made destinations in South America to our portfolio.

Despite the economic woes we continue to grow and had our best month ever in December. Hopefully we are doing something right to allow people to escape the gloom.





# THE PERFECT DAY

**The Upper Copper in British Columbia is hidden in a forgotten valley shrouded in pine trees. A tributary of the Skeena River, the Copper joins the main river just above Terrace. As we lumbered up the 40 km logging track dawn peeked through the mountains revealing mist hanging over the river below us.**

We began to hike down through the brush and forest. I was pleased I was following Dustin Kovacvich, as once under the canopy of the trees it was difficult to find bearings. Dustin is owner and head guide at Nicholas Dean Lodge, and without doubt one of the most experienced guides in the Skeena watershed. We finally emerged on the wooded banks of the Upper Copper to be greeted by near perfect pools bubbling through pink and copper coloured boulders. I thought I had gone to heaven...

My friend Michael Joynson fished through the first pool, methodically flicking his fly into each likely holding spot. As he reached the next pool I started with a horrific purple looking string leech. Almost immediately a shout went up from Michael of "Fish!" and Dustin moved rapidly down the bank to assist him. Michael had been fishing down the far side of a deep run when a steelhead had hit the fly like a steam train. I began to wind in, but the rod tip came up, the line went slack and the fight was over. Again I put out some casts as Michael and Dustin moved out of sight round the corner, probing the deeper areas of the pool with the

lead core mini tip and heavily weighted fly.... It swung round in a large arc and I felt a decisive pull.... But nothing more..

A commotion round the corner grabbed my attention as I saw Henry Gilbey scrabbling over rocks with his camera. Michael had hooked another fish, and a good one judging by the shouts audible above the noise of the river. By the time I had reeled in and waded back to shore the fight was into its final stages and I

saw a large rosy flank roll in the water mid stream... My heart leapt and I prayed this fish would stay attached as Dustin quietly instructed so he could tail the fish. Michael backed up the bank into the trees and the fish moved towards the shallows allowing Dustin to grab the tail. Michael's face, which up to this point had been grimaced in concentration now cracked into a huge smile. It was a beautiful buck with a dark red flank and rosy gill plate. Dustin measured it with a tape, did the calculation and proclaimed it 20 lbs. A steelhead of a life time.

Time flew past as we hopped from pool to pool, leap frogging each other to cover the huge amount of water. Michael landed a couple more stunning fish, but apart from numerous plucks and pulls I still had not connected. At a pool higher up the valley I made my way into the river, throwing a tight loop against the log jam on the far bank, enabling the fly to flicker in the deep channel. After about 15 casts the arc was rudely bent out of shape as a fish hit the fly. The silver steelhead came out of the water before proceeding to crash up the pool in a series of jumps. I could see my pink leech hanging from the corner of its mouth. The fish gave one more leap, slipped the hook, and was gone.

I think I probably looked crestfallen. Dustin encouraged me to start up ten feet and have another go over that lie and promptly produced a huge articulated fly sporting all sorts of fantastic colours. I did as bid and began lengthening line again. As the fly began to swing in the vicinity of the lie the 13' Hardy Angel was nearly yanked out of my hand with an incredibly aggressive take and hook up. I could hardly believe my luck until the fish turned around and headed straight for the lip of the pool charging at incredible speed. Oh Oh....

The reel was whining as I watched half of my backing disappear out of the rings. In typical understatement Dustin suggested that we "go for a walk" and promptly smacked me back into reality.. this fish was hot and was still ploughing through



*"The battle was over. We had triumphed. At my feet lay a beautiful 18lbs buck steelhead"*

the tail of the pool like a dolphin towards the lip 100 yards away. Dustin and I scabbled along the rocks and into the water as I desperately tried to recapture some of the line. I was just getting up to some where near the connection between fly line and backing when the fish went straight over the lip of the pool and into the chute below.

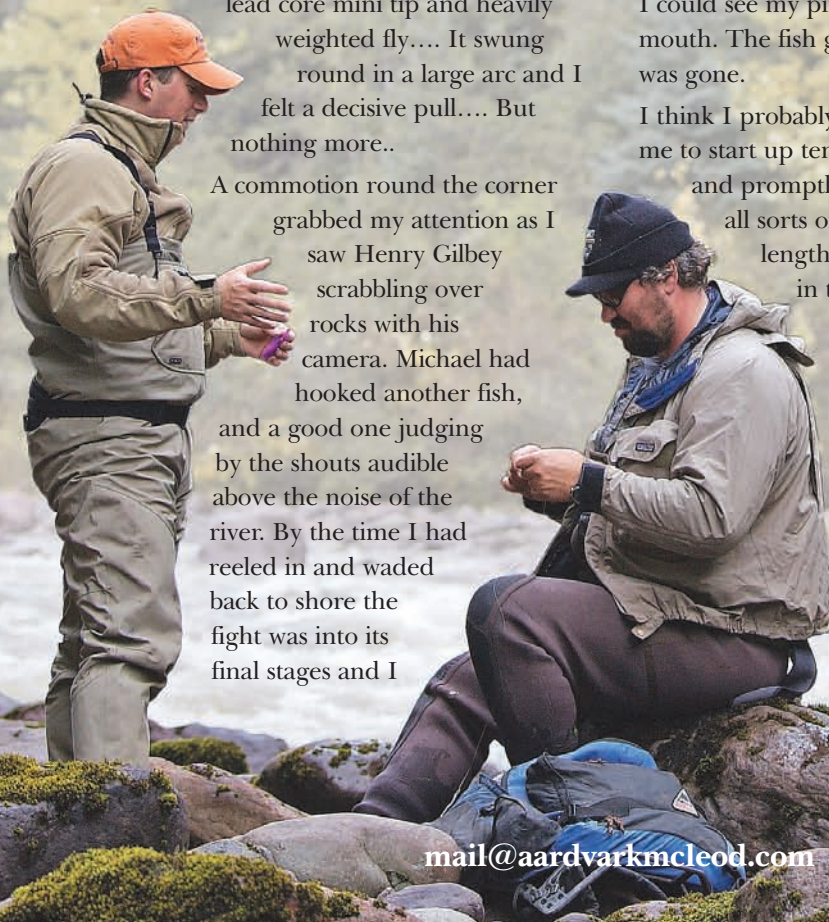
I groaned internally as half way down the chute it moved into a back eddy meticulously weaving my line through some branches and rocks there. No chance I thought. Dustin without pause charged out into the fast current and began to untangle the cats cradle. After a short while and a shout of elation he untangled the line and the fish continued on its way down the chute. The rod bucked savagely in my hands and the reel gave another tortured screech as the fish charged down through the fast water. We needed to be on the other side or we had no chance of landing this fish. The two of us tentatively waded into the current side by side and very rapidly I realised there was no way I was going to get across without being swept off my feet.

"I can't get across this Dustin!" I shouted, eyeing up the stacked trees on this side of the bank looking for an alternative. There was none..

"We are going to get this fish" he said flatly and then promptly grabbed my wading jacket and began to pull me across. I must re emphasise at this point that Dustin is 6' 5" tall and weighs approximately 20 stone. He is not a small man. Bears leave him alone. He charged across the chute hanging onto my shoulder with a grip of iron as my feet floated out from underneath me, the rod still upright and tight to the fish. Eventually I found my footing again and we began to move down the other bank. About ten yards below amongst the trees a small bay and sand bar appeared. This was where we would have to land him, so it was hook and hold time. If he went out of the bottom of this pool there really was no following him.

I began to pump the fish against the current, using the angles against him, keeping the rod low to the sides, and simply dragging him up through the current, regaining line with each drop of the rod. The steelhead really objected to this game and made another frantic wrench towards the lip. I hung on, refusing to give line. The rod bent over in an alarming curve, and then relaxed as the fish saw my way of thinking. Slowly but surely he came across the current into the slack water and moved towards our small bay and sand bar. One last pull, and he rolled over on his side and slide up the sand, his tail quickly gripped by Dustin's giant hand. The battle was over. We had triumphed. At my feet lay a beautiful 18 lbs buck steelhead. I was completely elated and exhausted, trying to get my breath back. So many things could have gone wrong there, but for once everything had gone according to plan. That was the most epic battle I have ever had with a fish in freshwater, and was the perfect end to a perfect day.

**FACT:** The Copper River is one of the exclusive classified rivers that we have access to. Nicholas Dean, now based out of the spectacular Yellow Cedar Lodge offer some of the finest fishing in this area and their guides are second to none. Apart from the prime steelhead fishing they also offer fantastic Pacific salmon and trout fishing and have numerous rivers to choose from giving fishermen huge flexibility.



# In search of Golden Dorado

Known as the “El Dorado” of South America’s fishing destinations, Bolivia has always posed enormous logistical challenges due mainly to the lack of infrastructure in its Amazon region. Combined with the sheer inaccessibility of its famed rivers, the obstacles encountered in mounting a feasible operation have made it the preserve of the most fanatical fishermen only.



The Tsimane operation in the North West of the state of Santa Cruz is located in the heart of a National Park and Indigenous Territory. They have secured 80 kms of exclusive fishing in this spectacular area where the Andes meet the Amazon, offering awe-inspiring backdrops. Clear rivers snake in between rainforest covered mountains holding specimen dorados, pirapitangas, (rare silver dorado) Amazon Pacu and the yatorana. Both forest and rivers are totally pristine and incredibly remote, alive with hundreds of species of unfeasibly coloured butterflies, birds and other wildlife. There is no human settlement but the indigenous tribes.

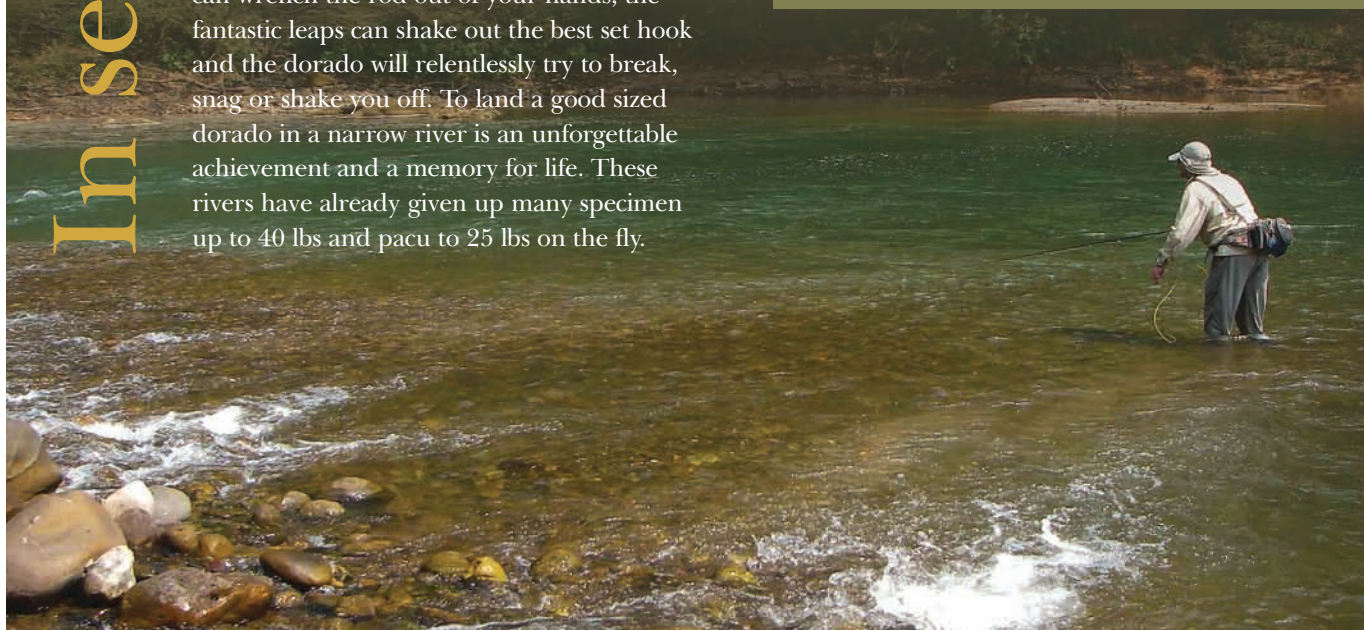
The golden dorado, *Salminus maxillosus*, is fast becoming one of the most sought-after game fish in the world. Although dubbed “The Golden Salmon” it is not related to the salmon, but instead is a close relative of the tiger fish. Often described as saltwater fishing in fresh water, hooking a dorado will make even a veteran fly angler sweat with nerves. The take can wrench the rod out of your hands, the fantastic leaps can shake out the best set hook and the dorado will relentlessly try to break, snag or shake you off. To land a good sized dorado in a narrow river is an unforgettable achievement and a memory for life. These rivers have already given up many specimen up to 40 lbs and pacu to 25 lbs on the fly.

Fishing is for a maximum of four rods. Nearly all fishing will be done wet-wading, with the custom-built aluminium canoes transferring a pair of anglers upstream from pool to pool. Fishing is almost entirely using floating or ghost tip lines. Anglers will fish two different rivers for three days returning in the evenings to shared safari tents, with hardwood floors and all equipped with private bathrooms.

The combination of the extraordinary scenery, outstanding fishing and the close involvement with indigenous Indian communities, will ensure an experience of a lifetime.



**FACT:** Fly fishing only is allowed on these rivers and the trips are arranged through the Latin America Fishing Company. The trip will begin and end in the city of Santa Cruz and will cover 9 nights with 6 whole days fishing.



# The new Casa Batida Santa Maria, Cuba

**This season we are pleased to offer fishing on the North Coast of Cuba at Jardines del Rey. The previous owners of Casa Batida on Cayo Largo have relocated their expertise and many of their staff to this new and exciting fishery.**

The fishing area is situated in the north coast of Villa Clara province in the west sector of Jardines del Rey. UNESCO has declared this region a biosphere reserve, and this stunning area of channels, mangroves and flats has world class tarpon fishing. The area is not very famous in Europe yet, but has some excellent flats fishing potential for big tarpon, jacks, barracuda, snapper, and grouper during the previous seasons. Fishing for tarpon here is world class. Fish from 10 to 40 lbs are present all year round and migratory fish up to 100 lbs+ start to show up in great numbers from March onwards. Fishing for big snapper and jack on the fly provides additional species variation. With the Bahamas Channel in the near vicinity, the bluewater fishing offers good possibilities for wahoo, dorado and tuna. Stunning flats of hard white sand have proved to be a heaven for large bonefish. They are a delight to wade and provide good quality sight fishing for bonefish and permit.

Accommodation for fishermen is either in the nearby beachfront bungalows next to the fishing club, or for those that prefer, in the nearby Sol Melia 5\* all inclusive hotel. The islands are beautiful and the hotels offer the same high quality standards that are present in Varadero or Cayo Largo. This operation is easy to reach by car or a short flight from Havana. A 48 km causeway links Cayo Las Brujas, Cayo Ensenachos and finally Cayo Santa Maria where the hotels are located. There are eight boats available including four Hewes Bonefisher 17’ with 75 hp and 90 hp that used to be based on Cayo Largo and four brand new Carolina Skiff Sea Chasers with 60 hp engines.

They are all equipped for fly fishing and spin fishing, with cooler, life jackets, first aid kit, and radios. These craft are well adapted to fish in



very shallow water or offshore on the reefs and drop offs located nearby. Cayo Santa Maria is connected by road to the main island of Cuba so we can organise transfers by vehicle to fit international flight schedules and finally avoid useless overnights in Havana.



**FACT:** Cuba is reached by direct service on Virgin from London Gatwick. There are also daily flights on Air France via Paris or Iberia via Madrid. Prime time for tarpon is from mid March until the beginning of June.





# Dry fly fishing for bonefish

The tern dived again, and I tweaked the fly away from it, a game I was getting quite good at. Each time it swooped on the floating minnow I continued to pull it away as the fly inched its way towards me standing high on the dock. I was standing on the L shaped pier in Los Roques bay, and as the sun dropped towards the horizon at the end of another perfect day I took another slug of beer before putting it down to concentrate as the tern was coming in for another attack. This time as it pounced on the minnow another dark shape appeared from below the surface and rolled up on the fly before disappearing into the cloud of minnows again. The tern squeaked, the line went tight for half a second and the fly was spat out. Too slow on the strike..... again.

At the end of a great day fishing on the flats of Los Roques there is nothing I like more than trying to catch a few bonus fish off the dock in the evening. There are some huge bonefish that live in the bay and they are quite content to mob pelicans, swim through the legs of the local children or pass underneath the hulls of the boats returning to the harbour. I had been sent some of these floating minnows to try by a friend, and at the

time I was pretty sceptical. After the initial shock the first time a large bonefish had come up underneath one and taken it off the surface and the hysterical giggling that ensued afterwards, I quickly figured out that by using a tern to dive on the fly I could attract the attention of the fish faster. The problem is trying to hang on to a fish if it is hooked as the entire dock is surrounded by moored boats. Ah well, I would cross that bridge when I came to it.

Over the years we have been working hard with Sight Cast to try and diversify the fishery at Los Roques. Although it has been one of the most consistent saltwater fisheries in the world with stable weather conditions year round I still feel we are only scratching the surface of what is there. As the majority of the focus has been on bonefish the other species have been mostly ignored and it is only now are we making significant inroads to discovering how the other species move around the

area. This year my group targeted horse eye jacks, jack crevalle, tarpon and snook with some success.

We have also added an offshore programme to the operation so that those that wish to mix up their fishing with some bluewater species have that option. There is some phenomenal bill fishing just off the edge of the archipelago that has largely been ignored. Venezuela is one of the few places in the world that has all five species of bill fish along with wahoo and dorado. Captain Alejandro Linares has been looking after fishermen in Los Roques for many years, and his 36' Contender with twin 350 hp engines is perfectly suited to the area. The boat is fully kitted out with modern equipment and trolling rigs, and Alejandro has extensive experience with bluewater fly fishing. While fishing with him this year we boated a 200 lbs Blue Marlin only 20 minutes from the lighthouse channel.

This February we also test fished Las Aves with a 54' live-aboard. Las Aves is a secluded pair of atolls four hours away from Los Roques which has proved to have some great fishing in a very different environment. The atolls have only ever been visited by passing vessels using it for a safe anchorage, and have had no fly fishing pressure. There are a few lovely flats, but the majority of these small islands have beach fishing. We found one bay with some huge schools holed up feeding and the group had a number of triple hook ups in short order. The bones have not seen many flies, if any, and we are confident this will provide a fascinating add on for those visiting Los Roques.



**FACT:** Due to its close proximity to the equator Los Roques enjoys stable weather conditions even through hurricane season making it perfect for the summer months as well. There are no fixed entry or exit days and trips can be tailored to your needs. The added offshore option now makes this a perfect multi species destination.

Tim Aldiss with his 14 lb bone fish



### Nordurá

As Iceland's top producing natural river the Nordurá caught over 3,500 last season. The Nordurá has 100 plus named fishing pools, and offers an incredibly diverse fishing experience, along with some of the most dramatic scenery. Combined with the comfortable lodge and excellent food the river offers the crème de la crème of Icelandic fishing.

1

# Iceland's top five rivers

Weak Krona and prime rods still available

### Laxá I Adaldal

The Laxá I Adaldal is Iceland's premier big salmon river and this season produced more than 30 fish over 20 lbs in its short season. Different in character to some other rivers the Adaldal has lovely grassy banks and very easy wading making it perfect for those not as agile as they used to be. Cuisine is of the highest standard and the lodge is conveniently located within walking distance of some of the best beats. The upper stretches also have some of the finest brown trout fishing in Europe which we have exclusive access to.



2



### Laxá I Kjos

Laxá i Kjos is only a half-hour drive from Reykjavik, and is nearly 25 km long with over 90 named pools. It runs through a wide variety of

terrain, and offers fishermen numerous environments from white water rushing through steep gorges to gently moving flats ideal for the fly. The river is divided into five two-rod beats and there is also a free beat to offer a choice to any angler at all times. Catches are very high, usually between 1,200 and 2,400 salmon per season. It is the epitome of Icelandic single handed sight fishing with small hitched flies.

3

### Langá

The Langá á Mörum as it is known is 36 km long with 93 named pools. Located in the same area as Nordurá it is a typical Icelandic salmon river offering technical fishing with small flies and

boasts outstanding beauty. This river has been fished by the British since the early 1900s, and has had a huge amount of work done to it in terms of fish ladders and other devices to improve its course for salmon to run. The modern lodge located at Jarðlangsstadir accommodates up to 12 fishermen in great comfort.

4

### Tungufljót

Tungufljót is Iceland's answer to Argentina's Rio Grande. Not that it has its length or huge number of fish caught per season as the river is accessible to sea trout for only 5-6 km, but the size of the fish is certainly comparable. The river flows south, through a pair of canyons so narrow that at points you can almost jump across finally widening into pools at Bjarnarfoss. The river offers some dramatic fishing and huge sea trout sprinkled in with the modestly sized fish, the modest ones being 3 to 10 lbs.



5



## EXPLORING THE MAYAN RIVIERA

Mexico's Yucutan peninsular was one of the first areas to be explored as a saltwater fishery after the sport broke out of the US and rampaged across the Caribbean. Many of the original fishing lodges that started then are still operating and have been refining themselves over the last 30 years. With the advent of ever new destinations many have overlooked Mexico which has so much to offer, not just in terms of the fishing potential but also for family holidays.



The lagoons of the Sian Ka'an biosphere are home to a wide variety of flats species that make this one of the top scoring Grand Slam (permit, tarpon and bonefish caught in the same day) and Super Grand Slam (permit, tarpon, bonefish and snook caught all in the same day) fishing areas in the saltwater arena. Apart from the afore mentioned species there are also good numbers of jack crevalle, barracuda and cubera snapper, all providing excellent sport to the flats fisherman. The larger migratory tarpon also appear in the lagoons and Ascension Bay from May to June. Above all it is the numbers of permit that attract anglers to this coast, as it has not been un-common to catch two or even three of these highly prized quarry in a week. For this very reason Mexico is ideally suited to those new to saltwater fishing but simultaneously offers a challenge to those with more experience.

Casa Blanca and Playa Blanca lodges provide a perfect stepping stone onto the flats of Ascension Bay and Espiritu Santo bay located just beneath it. Casa Blanca is a fishermen's lodge through and through where as Playa Blanca has been beautifully rounded to appeal to those that don't fish as it has its own private beach, Mayan ruins and stunning vistas. A trip to the Yucutan can be complimented with a week at one of Mexico's luxurious hotels such as Maroma or the new Mandarin Oriental Riviera Maya.

Alternatively we can organise a few days fishing as the perfect addition to a family trip in Cozumel or Playa Del Carmen.



**FACT:** There is now a new flight from London Gatwick to Mexico City on Mexicana with a quick change to Cancun meaning it is no longer necessary to travel via the US. Many of the lodges in Mexico also use a sliding rate scale for the season so the summer months often have some exceptional deals available.

# Peter Baxendale reports on a bear encounter on the Kola Peninsula where the fishing is not just about landing loads of Atlantic salmon

**“Dave” I hissed in my best stage whisper “there’s a bear behind you!”**


**“Stop taking the rip Pete” Dave replied in his deep Black Country brogue.**

**“No seriously Dave, there is one about 200 yards upstream.”**

**“Really” he retorted “you must be joking again, Pete.” He then turned around, leaving his fly in the water, and sure enough he too spotted the rather large somewhat scruffy bear rooting around in the rocks and lichen upstream of us. Sadly I didn’t have the big lens on my camera but I managed to get a poor shot of the fellow before he quickly scarpered into the taiga. It was almost midnight and the sun was disappearing behind the trees and the automatic flash of the camera had frightened him.**

Dave had already caught plenty of fish that day and wanted to try his luck after dinner on the smaller Acha tributary. He gave up his rod on the prolific Home pool on the Ponoï to a member of the party who had not fared so well, to come on a trek two plus miles up river. We were based at the Acha camp which is situated at the confluence of the Ponoï and Acha rivers. The camp is in the middle of the 260,000 square miles of remote wilderness, mainly north of the Arctic Circle, which is known as the Kola Peninsula. The peninsula is essentially an extension of Scandinavia which protrudes in an easterly direction into the White and Barents seas. Apart from Murmansk the population is sparse but there is no shortage of Atlantic salmon running the myriad rivers. There is also no dearth of wildlife to see and, to me, that is half the attraction of the annual pilgrimage north to the land of the midnight sun.

**FACT:** *An overnight in Helsinki will be necessary on the inward journey and visa's are required. These must be organised in advance.*



On our 40 minute yomp up the river, Dave and I nattered away talking about his coarse fishery in the West Midlands and he said he loved getting away to a proper wilderness each year and how he enjoyed seeing the bird life. As we left camp and passed the lowest pool on the Acha a red throated diver popped up unannounced out of nowhere curiously looking at us as we negotiated the bankside track.

Progressing through the birch and pine woodland a particularly dark, slate grey cuckoo kept its distance by flying hawk-like from tree to tree keeping a regulation 30 yards ahead of us. When we broke cover and started along the riverside proper a charming ringed plover scuttled across the pebbles and then darted upstream.

On arrival at the pool I had earmarked where Dave should start, we sat on a flat rock to select a suitable fly. A year earlier I had perched in the same spot with Steffen Juhl, the camp manager, when a large bull moose had slowly and nonchalantly plodded across the river barely 20 yards from us. The pool proved unproductive this evening although I had caught a 12 pounder from it two days

previously. During my tussle with the lively cockfish I had observed an osprey being mobbed by a couple of hoodies downstream. Anyway Dave and I continued to the next pool some 150 yards downstream where his green highlander tube was violently attacked for a split second before the line slackened again. Despite his rather old fashioned sideways glance I indicated that he should carry on. Six or seven casts later he was into a fish that, with the aid of the fast water, took him well into the backing. After a few moments he was in control and he quietly extricated himself. With a little help from his acting guide we released a fresh looking five pounder that rocketed back into the hurly-burly from whence it had been caught.

Having inspected his fly it was back into the pool as Dave was beginning to have a little confidence in his part-time ghillie! The tail of the run produced a second fish and it was some ten minutes later when we spotted the bear. In ten years of fishing on the Kola it was the first time we had both seen one. It seemed like a perfect moment to return to camp. Off we set and we heard the ‘chucc-chucc-chucc’ of a brambling flying somewhere in the distance. As we arrived triumphantly back a Bewick swan gracefully passed overhead. It was well past midnight and there were a few late night revellers in the mess hut but they were unimpressed by our sighting..... till I showed them the picture!

It was the same believers who thought I meant something else when I said I had spotted some ruff earlier in the week! There were three of them in a splash, slap in the middle of the camp. They were comically darting about occasionally



puffing themselves up like Elizabethan courtiers. They were observed by a dainty blue headed wagtail that seemed particularly indifferent to all their gallivanting.

The following morning I emerged from the shower block at 7 am to see a brick red crossbill quizzically staring parrot fashion at me in my towel and flip flops. It was to be the last day of fishing and I was off to Beat 1 on the main river. It turned out to be an eventful day with 14 fish landed to my fishing partner and me. We were not the only fishing folk on the beat – a pair of white tailed eagles soared high over the river showing off their two metre plus wing spans.

It was a cold week with a biting northerly wind but the fishing had been good. The water level was higher than usual but the party had bettered the previous season’s average of 40 fish per rod. There were four fish of 25 pounds caught and one of approaching 30 the following week. Dave was to be both the top rod for the week and the season, so he flew home a happy fisherman. But he went back to the West Midlands even more exhilarated for having seen the bear and the plethora of bird life the Kola Peninsula has to offer.



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# Sea Trout at the End of the World *Nick Palliser*

Imagine our excitement when we first heard whispers of a "new" river in Tierra del Fuego from which, during the exploratory expeditions, anglers were pulling out 20 lb plus fish. The whispers also mentioned this beautiful river meandering through dense "Lenga" beech forests, sheltered from the sometimes relentless Patagonian winds and entirely fishable with single handed rods. This tantalising river is called the Rio Irigoyen (*pronounced Irigwajen*), 180 km south east of the Rio Grande.

Of course the river itself is not new. I have met several anglers who had fished this gem in the eighties and nineties, back when it took two whole days (now 3½ hours) to reach the river from Ushuaia, which is the southernmost town in the world. Since only last year, a new operation has taken charge of the river. I was lucky enough to host the first group with them in January 2007. The week defied all expectations. Among four rods, we caught in excess of thirty fish over 3 lbs, including eleven over 15 lbs and four over 20 lbs. And that was quite a slow week. Added to the fabulous guiding, exceptional welcome, food and wine, I was worried this might be a flash in the pan.

The only way to find out was to return this year. This time I led a group of six rods (the maximum) to fish all 45 km of exclusive river. Our hopes were high. Our first two days were very tough as, incredibly for Tierra del Fuego, it hadn't rained for two weeks. Then suddenly, on day three, the fish began running again. Double figure fish were caught every day from then on, until the catch numbers left everyone feeling delighted and straining at the bit to get back on the river. A group including two of our clients recently returned and are proud to claim the river record: an amazing fish of 28 lbs. This stunning river is definitely no flash in the pan.



**FACT:** The season runs from January to early April. British Airways flies direct to Buenos Aires with domestic flights to Ushuaia with either Aerolinas Argentinas or LAN Chile. Maximum 6 rods. All packages include all services at the lodge as well as all transfers and 4\* accommodation in Buenos Aires.

## ALPHONSE WITH A BEGINNER

In November last year I returned to Alphonse Island in the Seychelles with three friends. Due to the credit crunch our party changed at the last minute and two bone fishing virgins came instead of the hardened criminals.

*The Chairman*



One of the virgins had undoubtedly lied about his fishing ability with a fly rod; I should have known when he asked me in Farlows if his bum looked too big in the flats trousers he had selected.

Fred had only ever cast for an afternoon on the Test. The team at Alphonse were fantastic, most mornings he was being given casting instruction in front of the fishing hut before we left. The guides were incredibly long suffering as they were continually perforated by flies.

This all makes it sound as though it was a disaster, but that does not really take into account what an amazing fishery Alphonse is. Fred reckoned he caught over fifty bonefish in

a week along with another twenty different varieties of fish. By the end of the week he had learnt how to fly fish and was besotted with the beauty of flats fishing.

As for the other three members of the party we filled our boots in an embarrassing way, with a week that included milkfish, trevally, hundreds of bones, triggers, dog toothed tuna, and for one of us a grand slam.

Alphonse may be an expensive bone fishing destination, but it easily justifies this with the wonderful quantities and variety of fishing. I now have to persuade my other half that a return is a necessary investment for the continued good of our marriage. I know Fred has.

**FACT:** The fishing on Alphonse is excellent and the fishery continues to flourish. In addition, the nearby islands of Desroches, Praslin and Denis are excellent alternatives that non-fishers and families will enjoy.