

# Aardvark McLeod

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING 2012 NEWSLETTER

## Fish Tails...

For the first time in 11 years I find myself not travelling this spring due to the imminent arrival of my second child. Does this I wonder, as my second spawning, put me in the category of a “multi sea-winter fish”? It is a strange sensation to be chatting to all those gearing up for the spring saltwater season, knowing that I have a few months yet before I pack my saltwater bags for Farquhar in November. Charlotte is shortly heading back to Seychelles and then on to Cuba later in the year. I am massively excited about returning to Iceland in the summer to see a selection of new rivers on both the north east and southern coasts.

As 2012 is the Chinese year of the dragon I am expecting great things this year despite the state of the world economy. 2012 will also be Aardvark McLeod's 8th year of operation and we are delighted to still be working alongside many of the operators who we started with in those early days. Our relationships with our destinations have never been stronger allowing us to maintain the level of service we are proud of.

May the fish gods smile upon us all this year.

*Aardvark McLeod*





# Farquhar Atoll *Seychelles*

Sight fishing to rampaging giant trevally on warm Indian Ocean flats is about as heart-stopping as fly fishing is ever going to get.



Bonefish are very cool, tarpon are immense, and permit could drive any angler mad with their sheer bloody mindedness. Nothing charges you down like an angry GT. I have seen experienced fishermen freeze as their

guide has “implored” them to please, strip-strike the beast as hard as they can.

The remote Indian Ocean atolls offer some of the best saltwater fly fishing there is on this glorious earth, but it’s those mad, bad and completely insane GTs that have really put these crystal clear waters on the map to the travelling angler. There are a number of destinations offering sight fishing to GTs on the flats, but the simple fact is that the Seychelles reign supreme – and Farquhar atoll is fast turning out to be another one of those “must visit before we kick the bucket” places.

Farquhar is a surprisingly big atoll that lies less than a two hour flight away from the relative bustle of Mahé, and like many of these places it’s all about what goes on in the shallow waters inside the actual atoll. If the conditions are right then you can play around with trashing your fly lines by casting to GTs in the surf zone. Where the edge of the atoll meets the might of the Indian Ocean it is often a hectic, adrenaline charged place where some truly monstrous fish like to ply their murderous trade. For the most part you’ll be fishing the calmer and more structure-free waters on the inside of the atoll. To stand on the inside of the storm ridges as the tide ebbs away, looking for GTs as they hunt these natural highways is an experience that will never, ever leave you. The fishing out here is all about the tides, and at different times you could chase the huge shoals of big bumphead parrotfish, do your best to conquer one of the many triggerfish that are tailing all over the place, smash some nice bones or even go for an Indo-Pacific permit. Don’t, whatever you do, pass up the chance to do a bit of bommie-bashing, because you will never quite know what you could go and hook. The best fishing always takes a bit of getting to, but Farquhar is about as good as it’s going to get.



The season is late October to mid December and again from mid February until mid April. The cost for the current season is US\$7,500 per angler with a maximum of 10 anglers per week.





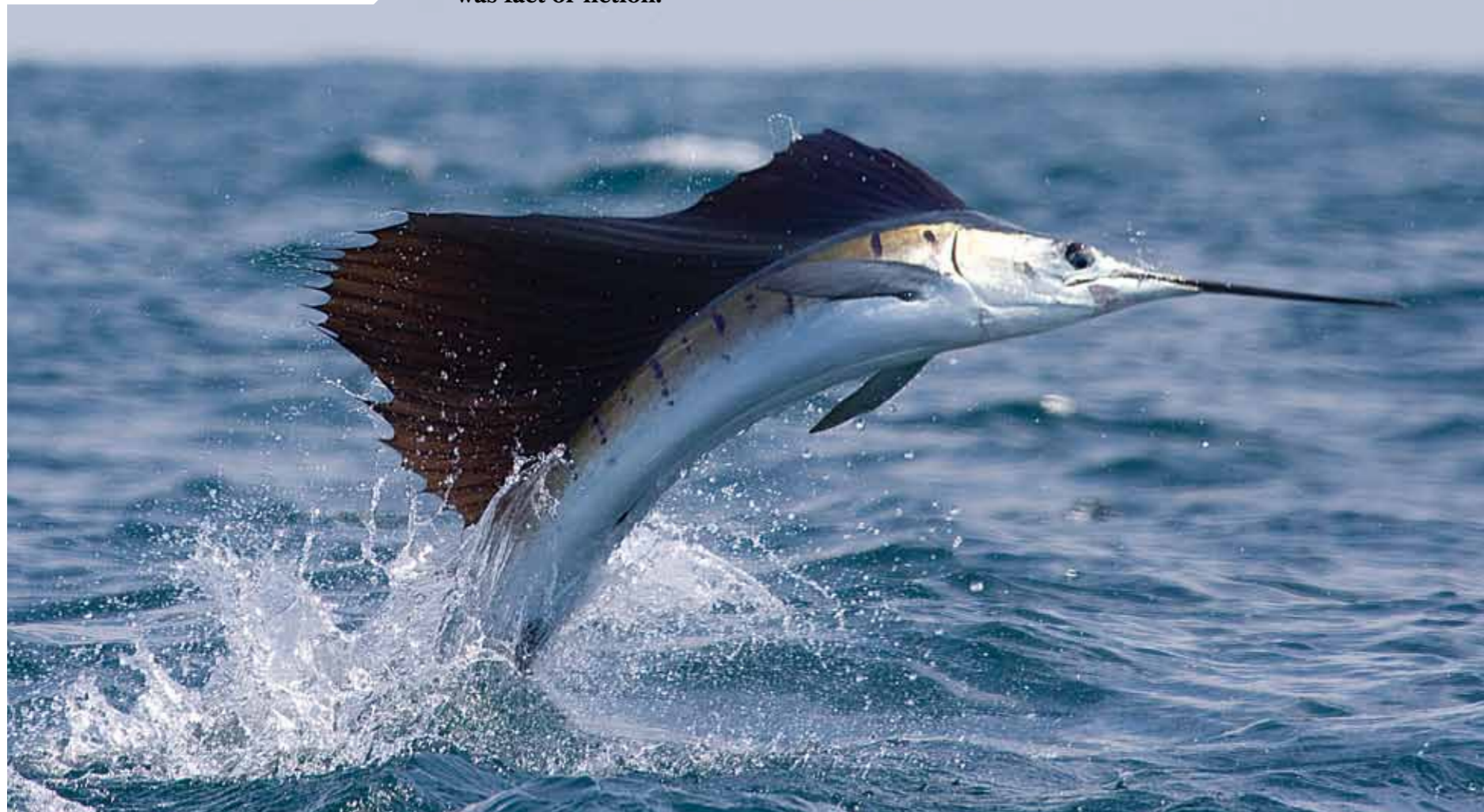
*Romping in Rompin*

# A Malaysian Sail Fish Odyssey



Jason Bowen, Grangers Fishing Tackle

Stories had been trickling out of a fantastic sail fishing location in Malaysia. Sailfish on the fly can be considered one of fly fishings' crowning achievements, but is not for the faint hearted. At the end of last year Jason Bowen from Grangers Fishing Tackle in London went on a mission to discover if the tales of huge numbers of aggressive sailies was fact or fiction.



**R**ompin is a mere 3½ hour drive from Singapore airport, and is considered to be the sailfish capital of Malaysia. Our excitement was tangible as Malcolm Granger and I looked out over the ocean holding a cold beer after an easy journey from the UK. This was my first attempt at sail fishing on the fly and nothing could have prepared me for what was to come.

The key with catching these hugely powerful ocean going pelagics is to find an area with a high density of aggressive sailies, and Rompin is it. I could hardly believe my eyes as, on the first day, we were surrounded by hundreds of fish attacking bait and hammering our teasers. We were the only boat there! It took me a little while to get the hang of the tease and switch technique, but after a few practice shots I was ready for the real thing.

The opportunity quickly presented itself as a hot fish attacked the teaser. The boat was slipped into neutral as it furiously punished the hookless rubber skirts. The mate managed to bring it nearer the gunnels for me to take a shot and flipped the teaser from the surface. Almost as soon as my fly landed in the water just behind its thrashing bill, it turned, took it, and I set the hook with my new Hardy Proaxis 12#. I was hooked into my first sailfish on the fly! It is very difficult to describe the sheer power and aggression of an angry sailfish, but they swim so fast they actually power across the surface before hurling themselves into the air. After a fantastic battle the fish began to tire and I boated my first sailfish.

I am still not sure the ensuing couple of days actually happened, and I have to pinch myself. In three days we raised 121 sailfish, hooking 35 up to 75 lbs. Rompin is more rustic than some sailfishing destinations in Central America or Africa, the beachfront accommodation was clean and comfortable. We ate in a wonderful Chinese restaurant just across the road which I loved. If you have not had a crack at these electrifying fish then I would highly recommend Rompin as an opportunity to get among big numbers of fish.



The season is late March through to November with prime time being August to November. Cost from £2,450 for six days based on double occupancy, excluding flights.



## Diary extract

## March, 2011

### Los Roques, Venezuela



*"Our last flat this evening. The afternoon had been spent following the pelicans down the beach at Madriz Cay, inciting large bones to attack floating gummies off the surface. The boat slipped through the aquamarine water, the engine cut, and we drift quietly onto one of the outer pancake flats, shaped a little like a horseshoe. Standing in the well I look out over the turtle grass gently swaying in the current as the tide slides across the flats. The evening sun is a ball of orange in the sky and at the bottom of the flat I see a multitude of silver flags glinting in the light. A squadron of bones comes out of the deep and edges on to the shallows... dinner time!*

*I drop quietly off the bow into the ankle deep water before creeping along the deeper edge to have the wind over my right shoulder. The squadron is slowly pushing up across the grass towards me. They find a rich food bed and half the tails are again in the air as if in challenge. The water is very skinny, I change up to a size 14 bonefish flea with no weight, flick the fly out to my left and take up the slack with the 6# Hardy Proaxis. I feel*

*huge close to so many fish and crouch down on one knee, the line swinging back and forth like a cat's tail at a mouse hole. The line is released on the breeze which extends the fly out in front of me like an unseen hand before dropping it onto a white spot of sand. The flags draw closer. The fly sinks. Closer, the squadron is over the spot. A slight tweak on the line. A tail goes up as a bone pounces on the fly. I strip strike and suddenly the calm is shattered as the school erupts in panic, dashing for the edge... the rod is bucking, the line is singing, and I am laughing...*

*Los Roques, where else..."*

**Peter McLeod**



★ Los Roques still represents some of the finest value for money bonefishing anywhere in the world. It is easily reached through four European hubs with daily flights and no fixed entry or exit days.

mail@aardvarkmcleod.com

# Cuba...

**So much history, so many fantastic fisheries – Cuba rates at the top of every saltwater fly fisherman's list. There are now two new destinations to tempt you and due to their locale it is possible to combine them in one trip.**



### Cayo Paredon:

Prime months March-July and September-October. Costs from US\$4,490 per person with a maximum of 12 rods per week.

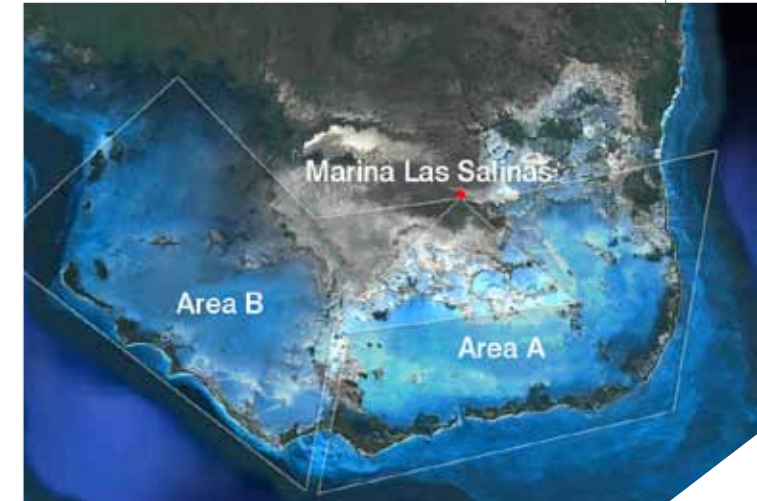
### Las Salinas:

Prime months March-June. Costs from US\$3,290 per person and a maximum of 8 rods per week.

Both locations fish year round. All costs are based on shared accommodation and shared guiding and exclude international flights.

### Las Salinas

Although an established fishery, Las Salinas has never realized its full fishing potential until now. In the past anglers have only been able to access a tiny area by flat bottomed punt but the new operators now have exclusive access to the two larger areas shown on the map while the smaller area in the middle is where the current operation will continue to fish. Easily accessed from Havana, Las Salinas allows you to maximize your time on the



ground and the water. New skiffs with a very shallow draft allow you to get to the highest regions of the flats never fished before. These skiffs take one angler per boat to fish the flats and larger 17' skiffs fish two per boat in the nearby river for tarpon. In a normal six day fishing week, two days are spent on the Rio Hatiguanica for tarpon and snook and four days at Las Salinas for bonefish and permit.

### Cayo Paredon

Located on the north coast approximately 90 km west of Cayo Santa Maria, Cayo Paredon is on the western side of Jardines del Rey. This area has been protected from commercial fishing from many years and, as a result, offers fantastic and varied fishing for bonefish, permit and tarpon. It has huge potential as an all round fishery: the hard bottom sand flats (white sand and turtle grass) make for easy wading and bonefish are numerous, with an average size of 4 lbs – 5 lbs and fish over 7 lbs – 8 lbs common. There are also good populations of permit in the slightly deeper water. Baby tarpon up to

30 lbs are resident; the larger, migratory tarpon are there between early April and the end of July in the deeper channels cutting through the flats. Still an unknown quantity, the fishery at

Cayo Paredon has enormous potential and offers anglers a realistic chance of bonefish, tarpon and permit in a day – a Grand Slam.



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# KAMCHATKA *Russia*

**Russia's dagger-shaped Kamchatka Peninsula slices south from mainland Siberia into the North Pacific, splitting two of the world's most fertile bodies of water – the Sea of Okhotsk to the west, and the Bering Sea to the east. Countless rivers feed these seas and each one is similarly full of life. With virtually no road access in an area the**

**size of the UK, the only way to get to and from the best flyfishing camps and lodges is by helicopter. From the air, picture perfect triangular volcanos puff smoke in the background as countless clear cold streams crisscross a landscape so green and picturesque it makes your eyes water. On this most remote frontier, an untouched wonderland for flyfishers lies quiet and pristine, full of mouse-eating trout and intensely powerful steelhead.**

Closed to all visitors during the Cold War, when the Iron Curtain lifted in the early 90s a gigantic wilderness was revealed. Today Kamchatka is wide open and our partners on the peninsula have several mind-blowing float trips and camps on offer. Kamchatka is not for everyone. Its rustic appeal is best suited to those with an extra bit of adventure in their souls, who are more concerned about the bend in their rod than whether the dining room's tablecloths match the wall décor. The reward is an amazing wilderness experience. It's about non-stop action with ancient, magnificent strains of out-sized game fish, and more about yourself than you may know.

You can wade in and feel the pull this summer by booking a one or two week expedition on the peninsula's finest rivers.

## Season: July-October

**Getting there:** Direct flights from London to Moscow (3 hrs) connect to a direct, overnight flight to Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka (9 hrs), where packages start.

**Sedanka** – 9 night trips are US\$7995

**Wilderness Float Trips** – 6 nights, US\$6795

**Sedanka & Wilderness Float combo**  
13 nights, US\$9295

**Zhupanova Float** – 6 nights, US\$6195

**Zenzur Lodge** – 6 nights, US\$6195

**Zhupanova Float & Zenzur Lodge combo** – 13 nights, US\$9995

**Kamchatka Steelhead Project**  
11 nights, US\$10,995



### *Sedanka Spring Creek*

It's been called the finest spring creek on Earth. After bubbling up from the ground fully formed, the Sedanka flows for 50 miles. Each mile is overfull with wild, native rainbow trout that average 2 lbs – 5 lbs pounds. Three permanent basecamps are spaced apart along the river and physically fit anglers fish by foot from each one before moving downstream to the next by inflatable raft. Floating lines, dry flies and mouse patterns are the name of the game. The Sedanka offers simple, classy flyfishing in total solitude, for lots and lots of heavy trout.



### *Zenzur Lodge*

On the lower Zhupanova River, at Zenzur Lodge, giant trout fishing finds its ultimate expression. Within smooth, boulder-strewn runs and deep pools lurk gargantuan rainbow trout and a rare breed of huge, sea-run char called kunzha. Guides and repeat guests don't get excited until the fish is well past 10 lbs. Zenzur Lodge offers en-suite accommodation, fine local food, and a sublime, onsite hot-spring. Beats are accessed each day by jet-boat, and each evening back at the lodge ends with vodka toasts to the most dramatic moments of the day.

### *Zhupanova River Float Trips*



The Zhupanova River flows through a supremely beautiful valley and is home to the largest wild trout in the world. Averaging 5 lbs – 7 lbs pounds, and maxing out at near 20 lbs, thrills on the Zhupanova come not only from the countless personal bests which are caught and photographed

every day, but from even bigger fish that grab your fly with criminal violence, evaporate 100 meters downstream, and spit your hook at the apex of an aerial cartwheel, leaving you quivering in a pile of adrenaline. There are six permanent camps spaced along the upper Zhupanova, complete with wooden guest cabins, flush toilets and hot showers. Anglers float by raft, stopping to wade and fish broad, shallow riffle and runs before arriving at a different, spectacular camp each evening.

### *Wilderness Exploratory Float Trips*

The most adventurous flyfishing trips on Earth. Many rivers on Kamchatka are still being explored for their full flyfishing potential, and each summer a handful of expeditions are launched to further this exploration. Discoveries in recent years have yielded over 200 miles of world class water on which it is impossible to exaggerate the number of trout and char that come crashing to the surface for your mouse fly each day, all day. There is absolutely no infrastructure on these rivers and anglers are accommodated with high quality tent-camping equipment imported from the USA.



### *The Kamchatka Steelhead Project*

Singularly stunning scientific expeditions on the edge of Asia. Steelhead are genetically identical to rainbow trout, but they go to the sea like salmon, returning to their natal rivers years later, silver, fast, massive in size, aggressive to the fly and exceedingly powerful. To dedicated sea-run fish obsessives, steelhead stand alone with Atlantic salmon as the ultimate freshwater gamefish. While common from California to Alaska, Kamchatka represents Asia's only population. Through a unique partnership of ecotourism and science, anglers fund and then join field expeditions organized by the Russian Academy of Sciences to study and protect this rare strain. The Project's basecamp is just 8 kilometers from the Sea and steelhead that ride the tides here in September and October are among the largest in the world.



# The Milky Bars are on me

*Each November I take a group of friends to Alphonse Island. There are some stalwarts and always some new interlopers – this year there were six of us, Baldrick, Don Quixote, Stuey, Big Andy, Little Andy and Ernie the milkman (me).*

Alphonse is the most wonderful fishery and some records were broken this year, including an unexpected one: the bar bill was by far and away the largest in the five years we have been going.

Though the weather for the week was not great, we had some amazing fishing. Two beginners caught giant trevally with Don Quixote, who had never cast a fly rod before the trip, complaining bitterly that the 45 lbs monster he landed was beginning to hurt as I cajoled him to wind faster. Alphonse is a great place to learn to fly fish and Don Quixote caught ten bonefish on day one and by the end of the week, was ordering his poor guide around like the proverbial donkey in the story.

Stuey had some amazing fishing, with a 35 lbs giant trevally that took so close to him it nearly ate the rod top. To cap this he caught a beautiful milkfish, hooked and landed on a flat in ten minutes as we were late for the rendezvous. Devan, his guide, was hilarious, running around the flat chasing this hugely strong fish with a net while shouting instructions.

The week we were there was probably the best I have ever experienced for milkfish. It is one of the most exciting forms of fishing in the world. The key for milkfish is to position your fly in front of its mouth as they suck up algae and plankton. As the fly is a small nymph, it is a bit like nymphing for 40 lbs trout on the Test.

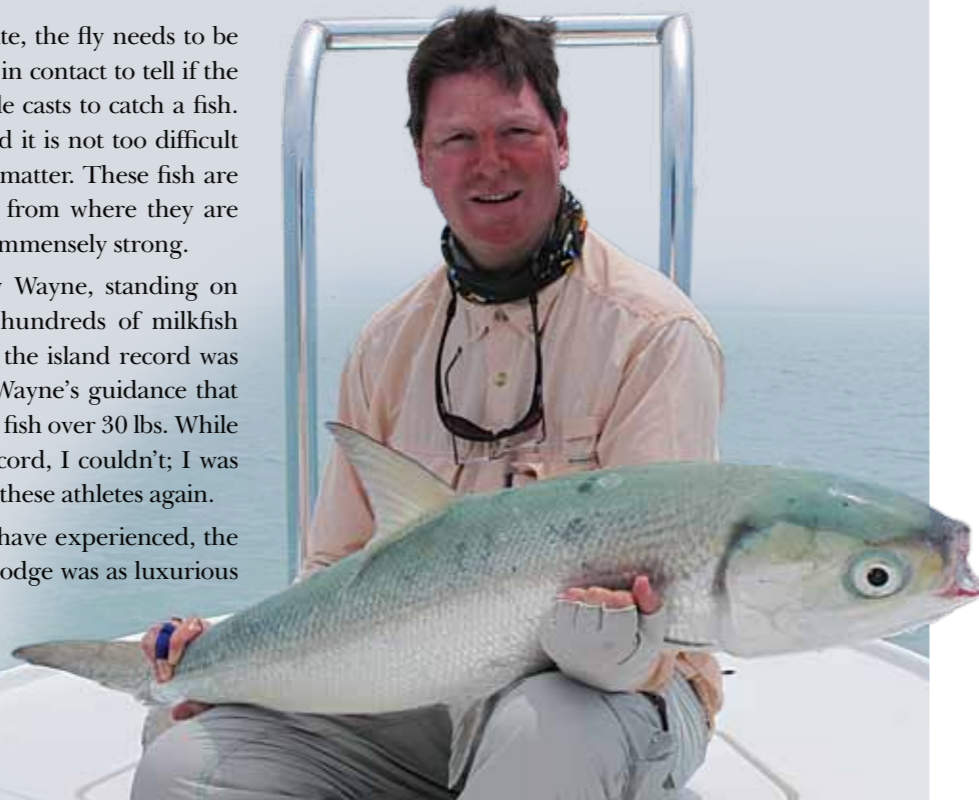
The cast with a 10# needs to be accurate, the fly needs to be static in the current and you have to be in contact to tell if the fish has taken the fly. You make multiple casts to catch a fish. To be honest if the fish are feeding hard it is not too difficult to hook one; landing one is a different matter. These fish are often landed an hour later and a mile from where they are hooked; they jump like tarpon and are immensely strong.

Big Andrew and I were positioned by Wayne, standing on the coral overlooking a channel with hundreds of milkfish feeding 15 yards in front of us. I think the island record was five milkfish to a rod in a day. Under Wayne's guidance that day I had landed three by 1030, all good fish over 30 lbs. While Wayne was then on for breaking the record, I couldn't; I was exhausted and dreaded hooking one of these athletes again.

The guiding this year was as good as I have experienced, the fishery is in fantastic condition and the lodge was as luxurious as ever. I have yet to hear of anyone coming away from Alphonse disappointed, though if you get into the milkfish you may be a little tired.



Alphonse offers world class fishing and has plenty to offer anglers, regardless of their level of experience. The season runs from mid October to the end of April and costs for the current season are US\$6,250 plus the internal flight of US\$995.



## Predators need prey... African tigers & the Okavango catfish run

Join the 20 lbs club

Nothing to do with Weightwatchers and everything to do with giant tiger fish. If you want big tiger fish, you need to get to Tanzania where the Mnyera and the Ruhudji Rivers have developed a reputation for being THE destination for large tigerfish on fly. Put simply, there just isn't another fishery that comes close to producing the number and size of size of fish as these two rivers. The consistency at which this fishery delivers 20 lbs+ tigers is astounding, to say the least. Taking 6 anglers, the season in Tanzania runs from August to early November, with Dar-es-Salaam as your arrival and departure point.



**Each year the Okavango floods a large area adjacent to the river and many different species of fish spread out onto the new flood plains to spawn. At the end of August, when the river begins to drop, the various fish species are forced back into the main channel. This triggers an immense feeding frenzy and while witnessing the catfish run is reason enough to visit the Okavango, it is the unparalleled tiger fishing that draws avid sport fisherman from around the globe every year.**

As the baitfish and their fry retreat back into the main channels, the catfish come in their thousands to feed, barging their way through the reeds and making the surface of the water boil in their frenzy to feed. Where there is prey, there are also predators and hot on the heels of the vast horde of catfish, come the tiger fish.

Arguably the finest fighting freshwater game fish around, the tiger fish feed with abandon around the catfish run, providing some of the finest fly and lure fishing available.

The 2011 Okavango season was phenomenal with a record number of double figure fish up to 16 lbs landed and an abundance of 7 lbs to 9 lbs fish encountered throughout the season. All indicators are that the 2012 Okavango catfish run is going to be another cracker ...the countdown has begun!



The life giving Okavango Delta is the heart of Botswana. It is without doubt, one of the premier safari destinations in southern Africa and thus a perfect way of combining first class freshwater fishing within a more traditional family holiday.

The season runs from September to December in an area of Botswana that is stunningly beautiful at that time of the year. Although primarily fly fishing, you can spin and bait fish, targeting not only tiger fish but catfish, mnembwe, thinface and 3 spot bream.





**From the start of registered catch statistics in Iceland, in 1974 Laxá I Asum has stood head and shoulders above all others, and to fish its exclusive waters has long been a privilege. A fly only river for 11 years, it is one of few rivers in Iceland that has never required the help of a smolt release programme, and this indigenous genetic stock puts Laxá I Asum in a league of its own.**



Laxá I Asum is perfect for a family or two couples looking for a private fishery away from the crowds.

What anglers cherish at Laxá I Asum is total privacy combined with high average catch statistics per rod. The average catch since 1974 is 1028 salmon per year, equating to over six fish per day per rod over the 80 day season; which is just staggering. Laxá I Asum is perfect for small intact parties that prefer to have a river to themselves and organise their fishing day accordingly.

The river is fished by two rods over 14 kilometers and has over 50 marked pools. The fishing is spectacular, offering a huge variety of fishing scenarios; waterfalls, pots, riffles and long slow moving pools that were made to fish the hitch. Little compares to hitching small micro flies; it is not really possible to describe the feeling of a large salmon lifting off the bottom through the crystal

clear water column and intercepting the slick waking V of a tube as it crosses over its path. If Iceland is the home of light tackle salmon fishing then Laxá I Asum is the pearl in the crown.

This exclusivity and high rod average comes at a price, and although Laxá I Asum is at the higher end of the spectrum this coming season huge value will be added. A stunning new lodge will offer unequalled comfort, highly motivated guides who know the river like the back of their hand, and extraordinary cuisine from some of the top chefs in Iceland.

## *Awesome Laxá I Asum* the pearl of iceland

