

# Aardvark McLeod

WELCOME TO OUR AUTUMN 2012 NEWSLETTER

## Fish Tails...

As the year rolls and Autumn approaches, I find myself reflecting on all that has passed in what has been a very busy and eventful (if slightly wet) summer. Our small team welcomes Steffan Jones and Alex Jardine who bring their own areas of expertise and complement our existing portfolio of knowledge and experience.

Steffan has a huge wealth of sea trout and Latin American knowledge and he will be returning to Argentina next year to continue to expand on that. He recently travelled to Cuba to see the north coast operations of Cayo Paradon and Cayo Santa Maria along with Las Salinas on the south coast.

Alex is one of the most technical trout fishermen I have fished with and recently accompanied me to the Laxá I Adaldal. He will be heading to Los Roques in Venezuela early next year to adapt his skills to the pancake flats and their populations of tailing bonefish.

Charlotte has become something of an expert on the Seychelles after several visits this season and is heading back there later in the year with milkfish in her sights. Meanwhile, I am counting the days before I once again do battle with GTs on Farquhar Atoll in the Seychelles.

The fishing world seems to have shrugged off the recession and we are seeing some exiting new locations, many of which we are helping to develop. I am confident that we continue to offer an unmatched level of technical knowledge and personal service and look forward to being of assistance when planning your next trip.

# South America

I love

**The Last Frontier** – In the coming months, when we head into autumn and then winter, there's only one thing for it; follow nature and fly south! There's nothing worse than those depressively short, dark days. Best thing for it; pack your rods and head to South America.

The solution is easy and there are a myriad of options open to you. From sea trout in Tierra Del Fuego, to massive wild rainbows on Jurassic Lake or readily rising wild brown trout in central Patagonia, fishing and non-fishing options exist year round. You can start in the Bolivian rainforest chasing dorado in April and end the following April on the rivers of Tierra Del Fuego, many of which will allow short stays to work around the most demanding of itineraries.



For something exotic then look no further than the programmes in Bolivia, Brazil and northern Argentina that target peacock bass or golden dorado. These marauding species are primarily found in river systems, some of which are reminiscent of tranquil trout streams. A single handed 8# rod is all that's required, with fish over 30 lbs a possibility at some of the lodges. If this is of interest look no further than La Zona in Argentina, Tsimane in Bolivia or one of the lodges in Brazil for peacock bass. These are some of the most stunning species you will ever catch.

The southern latitudes give way to some of the best trout fishing the world has to offer. There are a few people in these remote areas of Chile and Argentina that the trout are left to flourish unmolested. The habitat is second to none, with the quality and size of the fish constantly proving this. An area that is often overlooked, becoming a fly-over state, is the region of Chubut in central Patagonia; arguably the trout capital of the world. It occasionally produces New Zealand sized trout and the pressure is considerably less. The fish are more numerous, forgiving and more likely to accept your offering. If you enjoy fishing for good sized trout then look no further than Tres Valles, Patagonia Base Camp, La Posada de Los Farios and Huechahue Lodge.

## Exploratory & Hosted Trip

We will be running trips in February/ March 2013 to explore new and largely un-fished waters for brown, rainbow and sea trout on Tierra Del Fuego. Please make contact should you wish to join us on this magical experience and adventure.

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Further south in the province of Santa Cruz, anadromous species start to appear. Alongside this are some spectacular resident trout options. Jurassic Lake needs little introduction. If you want to catch numbers of wild rainbows that average 8 lbs, then head here. The season is long, making it a great option for extended stays. The Rio Gallegos is also in this province, and is one of the great sea trout rivers of the world. Combination packages can easily be organised with Jurassic Lake, so why not experience both during your trip.

We then take a short swim over the Strait of Magellan and find ourselves on Tierra Del Fuego, or Tierra Del Trucha as it should be known! This is where the revered Rio Grande is to be found, flowing over half

its course in Chile before meandering through some of the most famous lodges in the world on the Argentine side such as Kau Tapen, Estancia Maria Behety and Villa Maria. For dedicated sea trout anglers this is a 'must visit' river. No other in the world comes close to it in terms of numbers, size and consistency. Between the towns of Rio Grande and Ushuaia is the Rio Irigoyen; a small, single handed river largely unperturbed by the incessant winds found on the open plains. While it does not produce the same numbers of fish as its larger cousin, it has the potential to produce large sea trout in a more sheltered environment along with robalo in the sea pools, which is a cross between a bass and a mullet that provides great sport when the sea trout don't play ball.

Your journey doesn't end there! Where else, we hear you ask? Surely the next stop is Antarctica? Well, leaving no stone unturned, we have our hands on the most southerly river system in the world that hold salmonids. Navarino Island is just across the Beagle Channel and is home to brown trout, rainbow trout, brook char and sea trout. The area is hugely unexplored and we are the first to open it up to travelling anglers. Fancy something out of the ordinary? Then this one is for you! Easily combined with any of the TDF packages and a great trip for those venturing on an Antarctic cruise but wanting a few days fishing either side.



British Airways have a direct flight to Buenos Aires from Heathrow T5. From there the majority of these packages are within easy reach.

## Sea trout

The Rios Grande and Gallegos will fish well from mid January to late March. The Irigoyen fishes better earlier starting in late December, with January being a prime month.

Jurassic Lake will fish well from November to April.

## Patagonia trout

Will fish well from December to April, but January to March would be prime.

## Peacock bass

The season runs from October through to April.

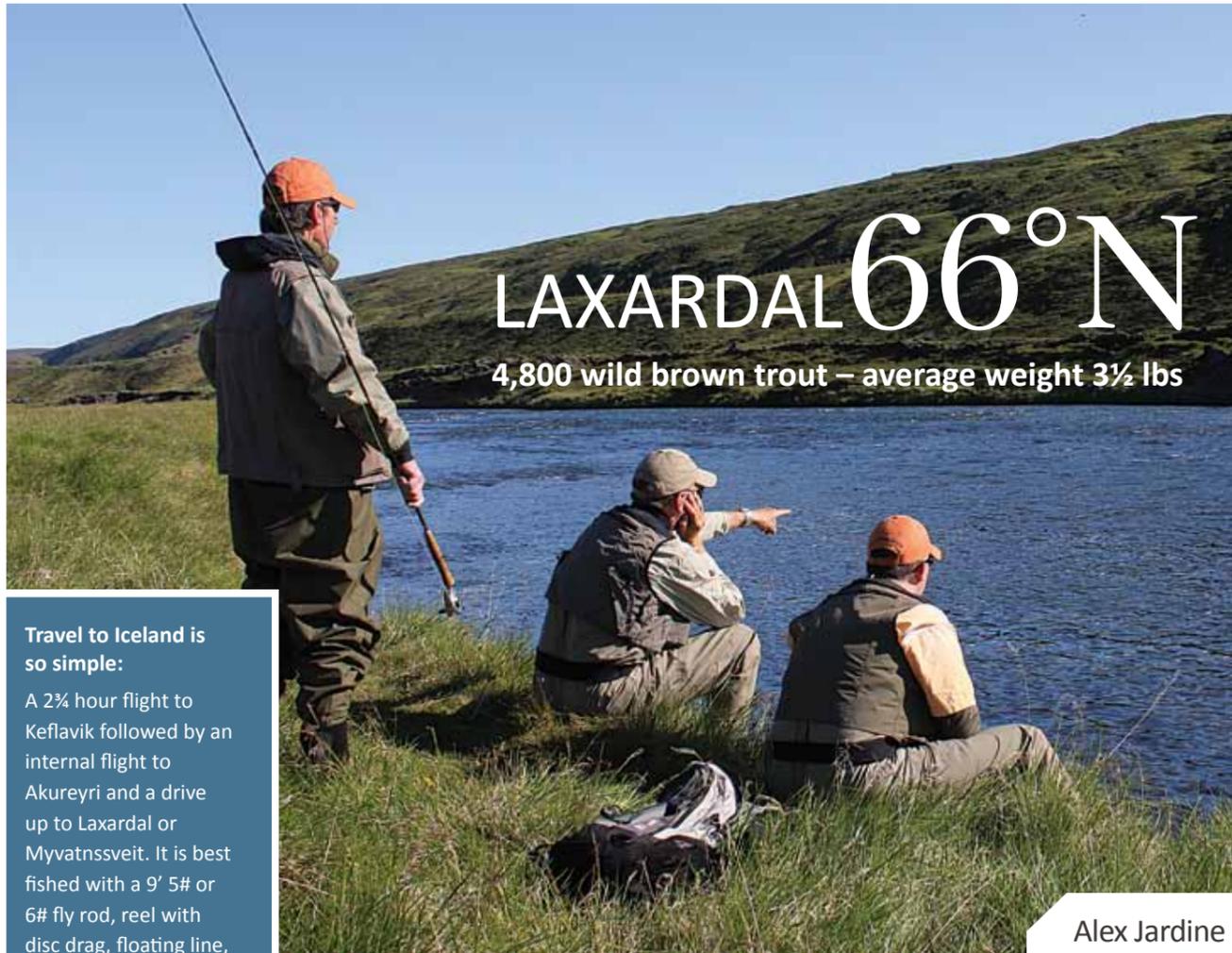
## Dorado

Options exist year round with La Zona being open 12 months of the year. Tsimane operates from May to October.

Prices will vary according to the programme chosen. Options exist from \$3,000 through to \$7,500.



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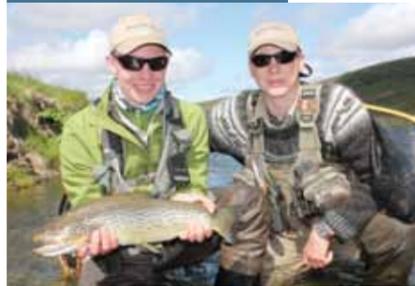


# LAXARDAL 66°N

4,800 wild brown trout – average weight 3½ lbs

### Travel to Iceland is so simple:

A 2¼ hour flight to Keflavik followed by an internal flight to Akureyri and a drive up to Laxardal or Myvatnssveit. It is best fished with a 9' 5# or 6# fly rod, reel with disc drag, floating line, leaders from 5-10 lbs and matching tippets. Flies should include black hoppers, black spiders and black Klinkhammers.



The season opens in June and is best fished with dry fly in July and early August. The lower beats take up to 10 rods, and the upper beats take up to 14 rods. Prices are from £1,450 per person based on three days fishing with four rods sharing a guide.

**For some time now I have heard whispers of the trout fishing in Iceland and I was dubious at best about reports of browns averaging 4-5 lbs, with the chance of 10-12 lbs fish (akin to those found in New Zealand) on a river with high population density.**

Iceland is an intriguing and unusual country. The landscape reflects its volcanic history and the distinct lack of trees allows the breeze to remind you that the Arctic Circle is just over 50 miles away.

As we arrived at the river we were greeted by a daunting expanse of water and some of the friendliest guides anywhere in the world who were optimistic that we would experience amazing trout fishing. The first afternoon we were battered by 15 mph northerly winds and an air temperature of 7°C. This first experience of fishing in Iceland, in retrospect, actually laid the foundations of one of the most exciting trout trips of my life.

Over the week the weather continued to improve as did the fishing. Laxardal played host to numerous personal best trout for the group, including myself. I raised my bar with a fish feeding heavily on the surface; it proved incredibly difficult. After multiple fly changes I cast just two feet ahead of the fish. It happened; the snout broke the surface, and my Bibio Hopper was engulfed. I had hit gold, quite literally. This prehistoric looking trout surged past me and off towards the North Atlantic and there was nothing I could do about it. The fish tore off 100 yards of backing heading for the next run and oblivion. The fish finally made a tired roll to the surface. At this point, my trusty guide Guðmundur (Gummi) swatted the 6½ lbs fish into his pan net. The battle was won and the celebration commenced.

I am a convert! The incredible trout fishing should be believed, and when it's so close to the UK it is a perfect place for a long weekend to go and start your own Icelandic trout whispers.

Alex Jardine

Howard Croston

Every day is...

# Pancake Day

**Howard Croston is the chief rod designer at Hardy Greys, and this year he returned to Los Roques in Venezuela for further rod testing. Although he has caught some large fish in exotic locations nothing was to prepare him for this experience:**

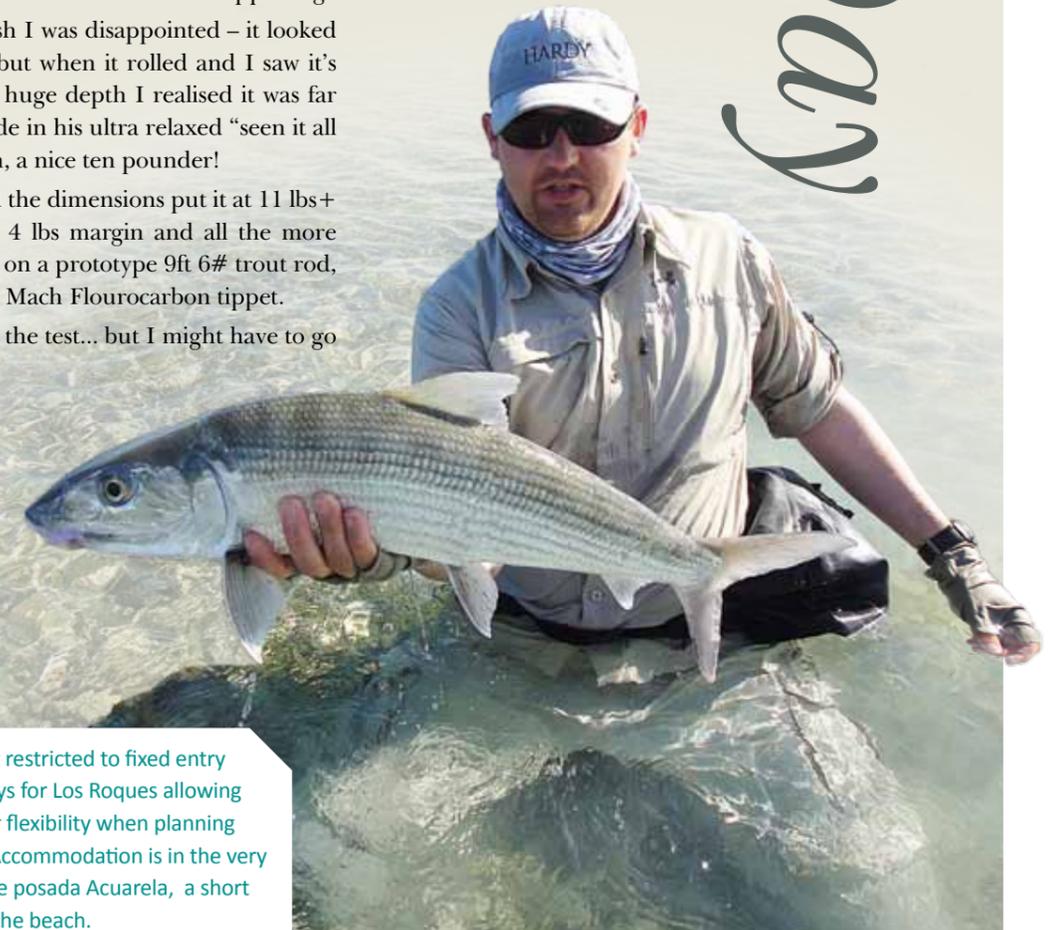
Alastair and I waded opposite edges of a distant pancake flat, it was late in the afternoon, humid and calm... perfect for tailing bonefish. I was wading alone, Alastair off in the distance with our guide. I saw them both stoop and cover a fish, but my side of the flat appeared barren as I edged along past a pile of conch shells. I didn't see the small pod of fish skimming silently over the turtle grass until they were on top of me; three slow moving bulges that appeared and disappeared as they cruised along hugging the bottom. The low light made it impossible to see the fish but when one of the slow moving bulges of water appeared and then stopped exactly 13 ft to my left I had no choice but to shorten my line and underhand swing the small Green Bitters in front of it.

The next few seconds will be forever burned into my memory. The bulge surged forward and then stopped... its tail kicked forward hard as it drove its head into the bed of the flat and, with no room to strip, I made a hard "trout strike" directly upwards. Under normal circumstances on the flats this is a schoolboy error, but with hindsight this "auto pilot" strike saved me as the moment the fish felt the hook it was gone. With most bonefish there is a short spell where they are unsure if they should run or not. This fish just went hell for leather down the flat in an instant, churning a bow wave you could surf on. Three mind boggling tackle wrenching runs later the fish was circling the three of us as the guide and Ali had headed over to see what was happening.

When I first saw the fish I was disappointed – it looked to be an average size, but when it rolled and I saw its massive shoulders and huge depth I realised it was far from average. The guide in his ultra relaxed "seen it all before tone" said "Yeah, a nice ten pounder!"

Measured and released the dimensions put it at 11 lbs+ my best bonefish by a 4 lbs margin and all the more special as it was landed on a prototype 9ft 6# trout rod, CLS 5000 reel and 8 lb Mach Fluorocarbon tippet.

I think the gear passed the test... but I might have to go back just to be sure.



You are not restricted to fixed entry and exit days for Los Roques allowing you greater flexibility when planning your stay. Accommodation is in the very comfortable posada Acuarela, a short walk from the beach.

**In 2005 I was involved in the letting of Brevyeni; a tented camp, situated on the lower reaches of the Ponoï River on the Kola Peninsula (Russia) immediately downstream of its neighbour; Ryabaga camp. We had mixed success in this wild and remote spot on the edge of the tundra so it was interesting to return in June 2012 with a party of four friends.**

# PONOÏ

## king of the kola

Olympics or Russia of the mid 90s. We were whisked away in a minibus to a nearby bit of waste ground that masquerades as the helicopter landing pad. Within ten minutes we loaded up the Mi8 and headed East.

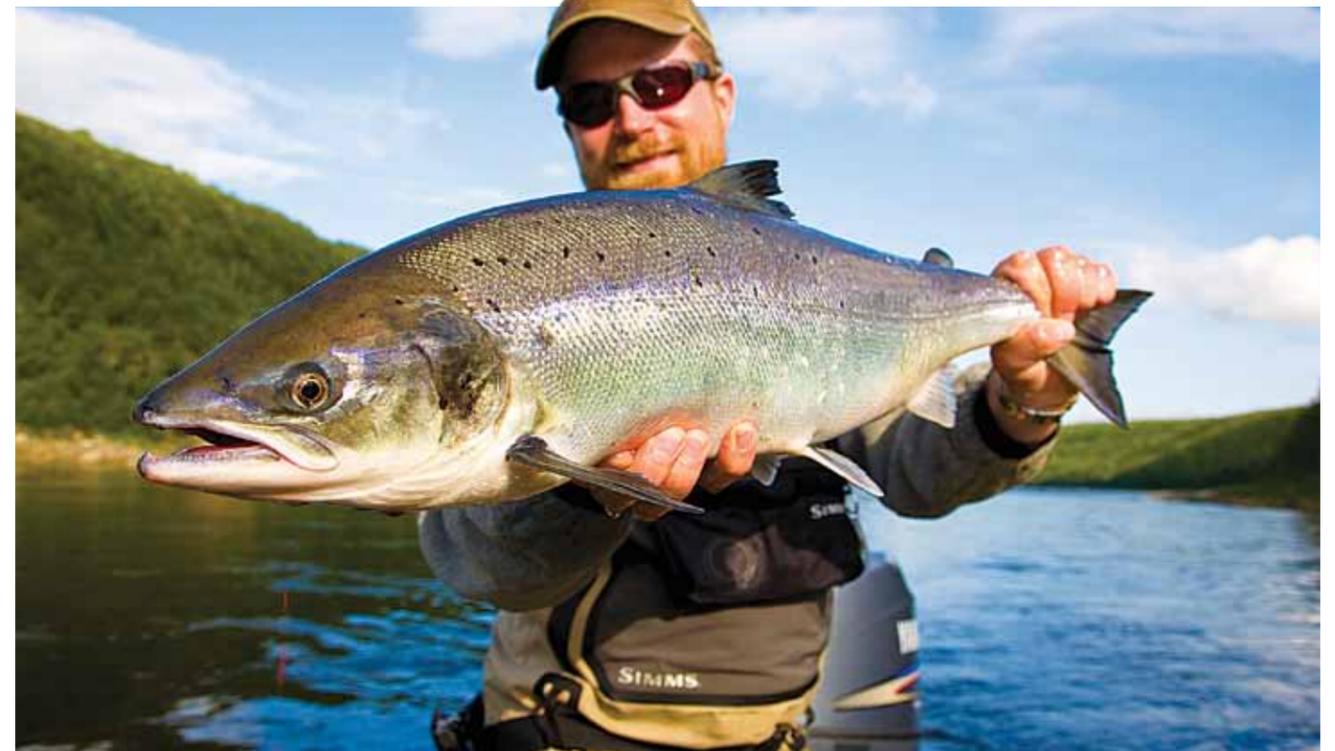
We were greeted by the friendly camp staff and guides and our kit was delivered to our accommodation. The tents of 2005 are long gone and each guest has their own cabin with electric light and wood burning stove. The cabins are tastefully appointed with carpeting and curtains (in June it does not get dark) and a decent sized towel and bathrobe are supplied.

The old shower block has been replaced with four new cubicles providing steaming hot water with amazing pressure considering one is in the middle of nowhere! The camp now has flush WCs with their own electric lighting although for the fisher of the early Kola years there is still a good old long drop for nostalgic contemplation. The central mess hut is well appointed with the walls adorned with photographs of heroes holding bars of silver (including Comrade Medvedev). A well-stocked bar was a welcome sight and the dining table was to see a few late nights as the week unfurled.

After the customary welcome and safety briefing and a good, wholesome early supper we headed to the Home Pool and surrounding water which can easily accommodate a party of eight rods without it turning into combat fishing. I managed to persuade the camp manager to ferry half the team to the opposite bank so we had even more space for our two hour stint. I wandered upstream as far as I could go until a wall of rock precluded further navigation. After half a dozen casts I was into a fish and I landed a 7 lb'er a few minutes later. A little local knowledge is no bad thing – I recall a friend hooking a fish in pretty much the same spot seven years earlier. It was his 40th birthday trip and I have a great shot of him playing the fish from the

We met up in Helsinki Airport having travelled from various ports of departure in the UK and spent the night in the Finnish capital. It was then all aboard the chartered Finnair fisherman's shuttle up to Murmansk where we caught up with old acquaintances from previous trips.

Upon arrival in Murmansk we queued to get through passport control but the process was considerably swifter than Heathrow pre



same rock (unbeknown to us his waders leaked badly!). My comrades had similar success that first evening with three being the best score. We were advised that a fast sinking tip would do the trick with a size 6 or 8 fly or a tube around 1.½". Certainly this proved the case on the first evening.

The following day I persevered with various sink tips and a size 6 and 8 Green Highlander and by tea time I had only had a couple of knocks. A change of tactic was definitely in order so I went deeper with a bigger, brighter, longer tube and straight away caught a couple of fish. Morale was restored; my fishing partner and I were happy with our combined tally of seven for the day. The following day we headed to the top beat feeling slightly worse for wear after interviewing too much local vodka

size 12 Silver Stroat. He obligingly came again to a size 8 Silver Stroat and measured 37".

The Brevyeni section of the river is more dramatic than some of the upper reaches of the system. The river carves its way through the taiga and tundra and is almost canyon like as it meanders round the bend past the camp pools. There is quite a lot of fast water with some turbulent rapids for fish to negotiate between slower glides. Like most Kola rivers when you see structure beneath the surface or a slight bend in the river you know you are probably covering fish. They do not show much – you may only see a couple of jumps a day but the fish are definitely there. The four of us, who had all fished an upper Ponoï camp together for a number of years, landed

104 fish for the week. A couple close to 20 lbs along with some strong fighters in the 15 to 18 lbs range, numerous 9 to 12 lb'ers and the rest mainly 6 to 8 lbs. The average for the four of us was 26 fish per rod which was exactly our

expected number. They averaged 41 at Ryabaga but you are paying another \$5,000 for the privilege.

So the moral of the story is as follows: if you want a comfortable small camp with excellent food and plenty of hot water and helpful staff at a sensible price with an expectancy of 20 to 25 salmon per rod for the week Brevyeni is a good place to go. It is a wild old spot too and you will not see another soul all week. You will, however, probably encounter peregrine falcons, whooper swans trumpeting away above you, red throated divers doing what they do best, bramblings, redpoll, white tailed eagles soaring above you and the odd moose. The camp has satellite telephone and internet access. If you want to see what fishing in Russia is all about but not to have to sell your house, Brevyeni is a great introduction.

## *Brevyeni is a terrific place*

the previous evening. I grabbed my fast sinker only to be told that the sink tip would be sufficient. Not one to argue with the head guide and thrilled at the thought of not having to go deep I obeyed instructions and had four fish in the morning and a couple in the afternoon. My companion took four for the day so we were thrilled with our combined score of ten. He slunk out after dinner and put at least one more in the book whilst I crept off to my pit.

As the week progressed the water temperature rose and the river dropped. Midweek there was torrential rain overnight and the river steadily rose by three feet by the end of the following day. Although the sink tip remained the weapon of choice we had success on the fast sinker too whereas friends had action on the bomber on a full floater. I experimented after dinner one night and rose a fish on the full floater with a



# Madagascar

**Madagascar is huge, the fourth largest island in the world and roughly the same size as France. With over 250,000 different species of which 70% are indigenous to the island we think it is an eye opening holiday destination. Throw in some virgin fisheries and you will have the trip of a life time.**



Madagascar is a place for the angler who wishes to try their hand at a variety of fishing from dogtooth tuna, sailfish and giant trevally to a multitude of reef related species. It is not a fly only destination and the use of flies, poppers and jigs will suit all types of fisherman.

There are two types of fishing; the offshore focuses on the pinnacles, drop offs, reefs and sea mounts

that dot the area, quite similar to some of the fishing in Mozambique. Then there is the opportunity for wonderful estuary fishing in the mangroves, bays and headlands.

The operation is run by South African's who have had a wealth of experience in fishing the eastern side of Africa from Kenya down to Mozambique.

The name of the lodge and the fishing areas are wonderfully evocative. Nosy Sakatia is the gateway to fishing areas such as Serpent Bank, Castor, and the Mitsio and Radama Islands. One of the main reasons that we favour this operation is the entire area is sheltered from wind by the mountains on mainland Madagascar, and enjoys flat, calm seas almost year round. Fishing is completely unrestricted by tides or weather, and very few (if any) fishing days are lost in a season. A nice combination is a couple of days at the base camp in Nosy Sakatia followed by the different variety of the fly camps on the northern Mitsio Islands and the southern Radama Islands.

Talk to us about combining a fishing and exploring Madagascar trip, we don't think you will be disappointed.



The season runs from 15th March to 15th January and can accommodate a maximum of five anglers. Trips are taken individually and priced according to the number of anglers in your party. International flights from Europe are via Johannesburg, Milan, Paris or St Denis (Reunion).

King Julien isn't just a ring-tailed, animated movie star – it's a new, sleek 28 ft mono-hulled boat powered by 2 x 150 Hp four-stroke Mercury engines that is comfortable and spacious.

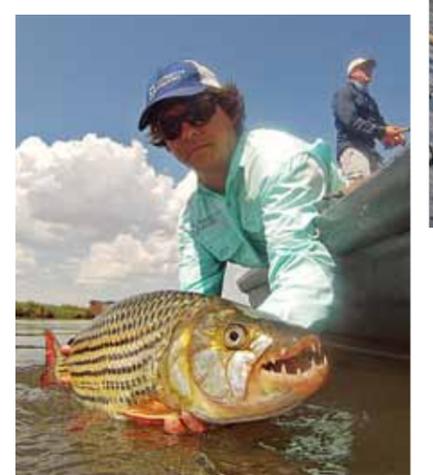
A typical week long fishing package will include five nights at Sakatia, and two nights at one of the fly camps. It also includes a day trip to legendary Castor Banks. Castor Banks is a massive underwater sea mount 38 miles offshore from Sakatia. This is a wild, untouched fishery and boasts huge numbers of GTs, sailfish and dogtooth tuna.



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**I defy anyone to come away from Africa unchanged in some way. You may be dusty, or be tired, but you are more than likely to have been inspired by the land, the people and the beauty of what is around you – it is a fitting reminder that there is a bigger world with uncountable experiences awaiting us out there.**



One undeniable attraction for us as anglers is the fact that we can indulge our piscatorial passions without coming under pressure from the non-fishers we are travelling with. There are few places in the world where you take your fishing rods and your wife and family and know that not one member of the group is going to feel hard done by.

Where else can a honeymooning fisherman get away with transferring his attentions – albeit briefly – from his new bride to a magnificent tiger fish or emerald green nembwe? South Africa has so much to offer – its rugged coastline is home to sea birds, seals, sharks and its seasonal visitors, the whales. The winelands, the garden route, the trout streams of the highlands and game rich area in and around Kruger; you can't be bored!

As you move north and west the experiences change yet again. You will encounter the vast, empty stretches of the Kalahari desert, the lushness of the Okavango Delta and very little can beat standing at Victoria Falls being consumed by the noise and the power of the Mosi-oa-Tunya, the smoke that thunders.

The barbel run in the Okavango in September/October is also a fantastic time of year to be in that part of Southern Africa – at the height of the dry season game and birdlife are abundant in this watery wonderland and the mighty Chobe and Zambezi rivers are full of challenges for the angler – not all of which you'd want to target with a fly rod. A two ton hippo on a 10# probably isn't covered by the Hardy's guarantee.

For those of us with a yearning to land a trophy tiger fish, we'd need to be further north. The journey will take you through the game rich Luangwa valley of Zambia, through picturesque Malawi and its enormous lake of stars and up into Tanzania. As well as being home to some of the largest tiger fish in Africa, Tanzania is an exceptional destination for families and couples – the famous Ngorongoro crater and, at the right time of year (which happily coincides with the tiger fish season), the famed annual wildebeest and zebra migration. From the plains of the Serengeti to the chimps at Mahale, the difficulty is deciding what not to include in an itinerary.



Kenya has always epitomised the African safari and the sheer diversity of game and scenery. The beauty of Kenya and Tanzania is that they not only have great beaches and blue water fishing but are launch pads to the Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives where you can hone your saltwater skills while your wife and family are off snorkelling, sailing or just relaxing in the sun.

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## FARQUHAR ISLAND *Seychelles*

The most southerly atoll in the Seychelles, Farquhar is just over 700 km south west of Mahé. This remote atoll has a total area of 170 km, including the lagoon. The large ear-shaped lagoon provides easy access to the countless flats, channels and surf zones which make Farquhar such a diverse fishery. Deep water begins very close to shore, giving you ample opportunity to target the larger species – Farquhar is building a well-deserved reputation for big giant trevally and parrotfish. Accommodation is in a basic but comfortable guesthouse and can accommodate up to 10 anglers on a shared room basis. Meals are taken communally in the outside dining area.

**The Season:** *Late October until mid-December and mid-February to mid-April. We are hosting a trip to Farquhar 16-23 November 2013 so please do contact us for more details if you would like to join.*

# Indian Ocean

## ST BRANDONS *Mauritius*

If wading and sight casting to double digit bonefish, finicky Indo-Pacific permit and a host of trevally species on powder white sand flats is your idea of heaven then St Brandon's Atoll is your Mecca.

St Brandon's is a group of over 50 small islands, coral ridges and vast sand flats which is cut by three major passes and extends 50 km from north to south. Situated 268 nautical miles north-east of Mauritius's main island this area is rich in fish stocks, flora and fauna. The magnificent condition of the coral and the lobster infested outer reefs is proof that the area has had very little human interference. This is a live aboard operation, operating out of Port Louis, Mauritius. Accommodation on board is based on two people sharing with ensuite facilities and the boat, The Gryphon, can accommodate eight anglers and four guides as well as the crew of four.

**The Season:** *October-December and April-June.*

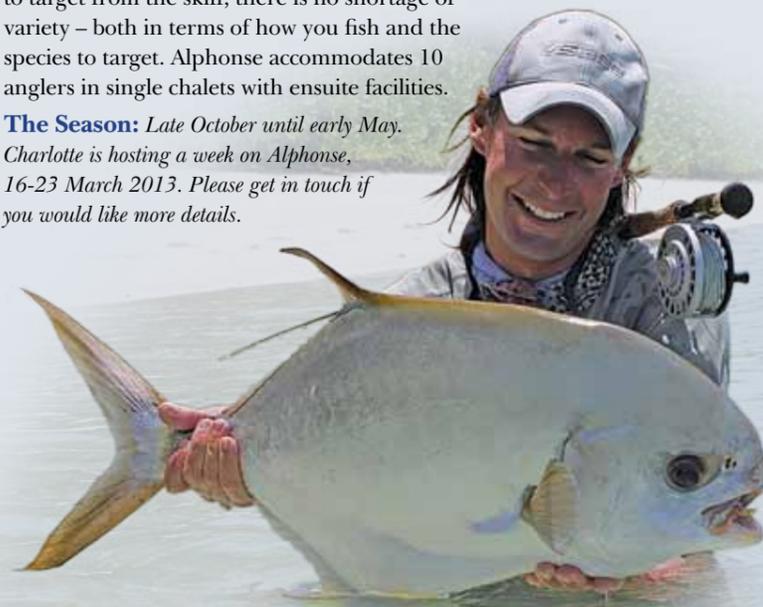


## For the fishermen

## ALPHONSE ISLAND *Seychelles*

One of the most consistent saltwater fisheries in the world, Alphonse continues to provide outstanding fishing not only for bonefish but for trigger fish, milkfish, giant trevally and a host of other species. With hard sand flats to wade, and channels within the reef to target from the skiff, there is no shortage of variety – both in terms of how you fish and the species to target. Alphonse accommodates 10 anglers in single chalets with ensuite facilities.

**The Season:** *Late October until early May. Charlotte is hosting a week on Alphonse, 16-23 March 2013. Please get in touch if you would like more details.*



## MALDIVES

The Maldives is an archipelago of small coral islands, running north to south in the Indian Ocean. Less than 200 of the atolls are inhabited and the pristine white beaches and clear azure waters are an unparalleled draw for non-fishers and families. A rare combination in the Maldives, Dhonakulhi is a stunning lodge from which fishing is available. The island is unique in its formation as the reef system it sits on has a natural channel splitting it into two distinct parts forming a natural harbour for the marina. For the fly fisherman, it's a rare opportunity to fish in a part of the Indian Ocean which is has strict fishing restrictions around inhabited islands. You may target bonefish, trevally species and trigger fish but also sailfish and tuna on the fly offshore.

**Best time to be there:** *The dry season between December and April is the most popular while May to November tends to be quieter but with the chance of rain as humidity then can be higher. For divers, November and April are associated with increased water clarity and therefore better visibility and the Maldives is one of the best locations to see whales and dolphins.*



## DESROCHES ISLAND *Seychelles*

South west of Mahé, Desroches is a stunning coral island, 3 miles long and ½ a mile wide. Covered with palm trees that fringe the seemingly endless white sandy beaches, the island is ringed by a reef and shallow water. There are a variety of room choices including suites with walled outside bathrooms and four bedroom villas with their own private pools that are ideal for families. For honeymooners the one bedroom villas, all with enclosed gardens and private pools are perfect. There is ample choice to suit all requirements. The island has a spa, central swimming pool and activities include diving, snorkeling, tennis, kayaking, sailing and windsurfing in addition to fishing. For the fishermen, there is fishing around the island itself and on the nearby islands of Poivre and St Josephs.

## DENIS ISLAND *Seychelles*

A small, classic castaway island... but with all the comforts that you could wish for. Lying north of Mahé, Denis is a coral island sitting on the edge of the Seychelles bank, ideal for divers,



and almost entirely surrounded by coral reefs. The rooms are all sea facing with outside decks and day beds, spacious and comfortable bedrooms with large bathrooms and a private, walled garden with an outdoor shower. There is a central pool and spa facilities and activities include diving, snorkeling, tennis and fishing. For the fisherman there is an offshore boat and the island has some wading flats – it is a great place to take your rod for a walk.

## The diplomatic option

**Best time to be in the Seychelles:** *Although a year round destination, there are periods that suit specific activities. October to March sees the north westerly trade winds blow, with lower wind speeds, an ideal time for fishing. The brisker south easterly trades blow from May to September which is ideal for windsurfing and sailing. The main breeding season for birds is April with Sooty Terns nesting between May and September. Hawksbill turtles nest between October and February while Green turtles will nest all year round.*

Prime time for bones is August, September and October. The temperature in the lagoon plays a big role in bonefish behaviour. The guides use popping gear to tease up some big GTs, so there is always the chance to hook a real monster. The best months to target giant trevally are January and February, when large numbers of baitfish move into the lagoon. If the weather is settled it is possible to go out of the lagoon and target all manner of species behind the surf.

## James Christmas, a guide on Alphonse Island, Seychelles, headed to Aitutaki in the Cook Islands, in search of its fabled big bonefish...



I live and work on an atoll that sees upwards of 11,000 bonefish landed per season, so you could presume that I was confident in my own ability to catch bonefish. However it was with mixed feelings that I set off to Aitutaki in the Cook Islands.

All I could think about was that there were also monster giant trevally in this lagoon and if the bonefish are rumoured to exceed the 20 lbs mark, then the giant trevally must be the stuff of nightmares. This is a place where a world record bonefish is a real possibility.

I was confident that this was going to be a walk in the park: arrive on Aitutaki, meet up with guide, take a walk on pristine white sand flat, spot bonefish as big as a donkey, cast fly in front of bonefish, wait for bonefish to scream over and inhale fly, strip set hook, watch hundreds of yards of backing peel off reel, reel hundreds of yards of backing

back onto reel. Repeat. Repeat maybe one or two times more. Land bonefish. Take hero photographs. Release bonefish.

Then I could settle in and concentrate on the thing that really gets my blood pumping; casting monster flies at some monster giant trevally as they moved up into the lagoon.

Little did I realise that I was about to be schooled, and to learn you should never take anything for granted, especially when it comes to fishing. During my stay I encountered some monster bones and caught some of the smaller specimens at 10 – 12 lbs and numerous other species. I also hooked a GT that wrapped the line around an open fly box, flipped it up into the air and showered us with heavy clousers and baitfish patterns. Aitutaki lagoon holds some of the cleanest water you can find anywhere and no matter where you look, you will be blown away by the stunning shades of azure and aquamarine blues contrasted by the intense greens of the tropical vegetation. This kind of beauty takes your breath away and while I had not stuck one of the trophies, I had seen enough of them to realise that this was indeed a special place!

A lot of what brings us to travel thousands of miles to far off, remote and sometimes lonely places, all in search of a creature that science tells us at best, has a brain the size of a pea, can be boiled down to only a few defining moments. Moments often as brief as only a few milliseconds, but moments containing the fullness of exquisite madness, frustration, elation, sweet chaos and complete satisfaction!

It is these moments that drive us as fly fishers, and Aitutaki is one of these places where such moments, will intrude on you more often than you could dare imagine and heaven is spelled A-i-t-u-t-a-k-i!

# 20 lbs + bonefish?