

T·R·A·V·E·L N·O·T·E·S

May 2004

TARPON CAY LODGE BACKCOUNTRY TARPON

Every now and then we visit a new spot that really gets us going. These are the spots that defy comparison and ultimately become the benchmark by which other destinations are measured. Take the Seychelles as an example. When we first visited these atolls, they were virtually unknown and unfished. This was way before any lodges were built or guides available. What we found was a perfect habitat, an incredibly prolific fish population and plenty of room to explore the numerous atolls not yet "discovered" by the rank and file. Fit these three criteria and you've got a sure winner! Today the Seychelles is recognized as perhaps the best bonefishing destination in the world. It is always a great joy to find such a untouched, unexplored and prolific fishery. It is the best part of our job and we love it!

In November 2003, we were lucky enough to find one of these truly incredible spots. A spot for backcountry tarpon and snook that just simply destroys the standards by which most destinations for these species are measured.

Located on the Yucatan Peninsula's northern coast, hundreds of miles away from the well known resorts at Ascension Bay, stretches an unfished and untapped coastline that very few anglers have seen. The habitat is perfect for tarpon and snook and they show up in amazing numbers. Located in the Rio Largartos National Preserve, this area teems with life and is reminiscent of the Florida Everglades.

We have made arrangements for visiting anglers to be housed in a comfortable lodge that sits within a few feet of the ocean and offers a charming view of the surrounding village. Here local fishermen busily come and go, harvesting the sea as they have for generations. The town is colorful with shops and homes reflecting the traditional bright Mexican hues. Using the daily bounty of tuna, dorado and snapper, the cooks at Tarpon Cay Lodge feature some of the best fresh seafood around.

The fishing schedule at Tarpon Cay Lodge maximizes the area's potential and begins before dawn with a made-to-order breakfast at around 6:00 AM. Fully nourished, you'll then head for the water! Fishing in the biosphere requires no lengthy boat rides. With forty miles of superb habitat available, you probably will not see another boat unless it's in your party. Poling quietly

through small creeks and inside bays, it is not uncommon to peer over a mangrove bush and see a gang of silver backs aggressively rolling as they chase bait. This is tarpon fishing at its best and often only one cast is needed. But remember, these are tarpon (albeit "babies"). They are just as feisty as their bigger brothers and nearly as hard to hook. The tarpon's instincts demand it to jump and while this reaction is merely a survival adaptation for the fish, it offers a phenomenal show for the angler. In the tarpon game, it's common to land only about forty percent of fish hooked. But when 20 lbs. of gill-rattling silver dances upside down before throwing your fly, it's hard to be too upset when a fish comes unbuttoned... and at Tarpon Cay, there's always that next fish!

While the tarpon at Tarpon Cay Lodge grow to be about 35 pounds before they depart to join their ancient migration route, the snook contentedly prowl the shoreline and feel no reason to leave this estuary.

With abundant forage, the snook grow to be fat and happy. Ambush feeders, they are best found on lower tides, sitting in hidden holes and fishy pockets. Quiet approaches and long casts are the best way to hook this legendary species.

If you are looking to do battle with the big tarpon, this is not your destination. But if fast action, amazing acrobatics and a down 'n dirty 8 wt. "street fight" sounds appealing, this is for you. Managed with conservation and sustainability in mind, this operation has the right attitude to keep a confirmed tarpon junky coming back year after year.

One final note: Tarpon Cay is a little over three hours by air-conditioned van from Cancun making it possible to fish Tarpon Cay while your family and friends vacation in Cancun!



WEST SIDE STORY

OUTPOST LIVEBOARD TRIP REPORT

At 2,300 square miles, Andros is the largest island in the Bahamas Archipelago. Andros occupies 43 percent of all Bahamian land and this huge mass is riddled with channels, cuts, creeks and bights, some of which pass through the entire island. While it may be only 50 miles to travel the west shore from Red Bays to the North Bight, there are a thousand miles of shoreline and hundreds of square miles of flats in this convoluted maze of creeks, salinas and openings. This remote shoreline is one of the least accessible areas in the Bahamas. Here there are no roads, no pop cans, no villages and no footprints in the sand. It is literally a no man's

land making it just our kind of place!

For seven glorious days last October, the West Side was ours and ours alone! Old friends, including Dr. Brian Crock, Dr. Larry Towning, Dr. Craig Johnston,

Eric Berger, Angling Destinations' photographer Jeff Stine and I explored the raw land surrounding The Horn on this West Side of Andros. We moored the 61' Hatteras, appropriately named the *Outpost*, at Williams Island. Penny and Fred Wheeler, the owners of this lovely shoal-draft yacht, served as our crew. Percy and Stanford were our guides. Our job was to explore the shallow waters that surround The Horn and attempt to decipher this maze of creeks and basins. Maps to the area lack detail and in many cases bear little or no resemblance to the actual geography.

If the wind was prevailing from the usual northeast, we often stayed on the outside flats. But if the wind was from the west, these outside flats became milky due to wave action and we opted to go up the creeks. This option minimized the effect of any of the unsettled weather we experienced during our week. What we found on both the exterior flats and interior creeks were bonefish in every imaginable configuration: singles, doubles, small groups, huge swirling schools, mudding fish, tailing fish, still fish in skinny water, cruising fish on white sand bottoms, fish on soft flats, hard coral and hardpan, bones on the move and bones lollygagging on the edges of the mangroves. We found big bones spiking up over shallow worm mounds, little bones hiding in the milky surf and giant bones scut-

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55... AND NOT COUNTING

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed in the things that you didn't do than in the ones you did do... Mark Twain

ting on packed sand flats, their tails, dorsal fins and the anatomy in between completely exposed. We saw hard to see fish and fish absurdly easy to spot with black backs over white sand. You name it, we saw it. We saw a few permit and even caught one... talk about a bonus!

We diligently explored every area we visited because every area held promise. Consistent success breeds a certain "ability to focus". This drive to be constantly attentive brought a tired but happy crew back to the *Outpost* each evening. It was then, when your eyes were tired and the sunscreen and sweat had stained your shirt's neck band, that the luxurious *Outpost* was most appreciated. From the wonderful meals to the powerful air conditioning, from the spacious cabins to the hot showers and from the satellite TV baseball playoffs to the DVD movies, we loved our home. Almost every evening after dinner, we sat on the back deck sipping port and smoking cigars while recounting the day's activities. This was a special time in a special place.



If you are considering a trip aboard the *Outpost*, you should know a few things first. The *Outpost* is a first class, completely refurbished, absolutely immaculate 61' shoal draft Hatteras. It sports two 220 hp, 6 cylinder, Isuzu engines that hum contentedly in a room that is clean enough to eat off the floor. The air conditioning system is superb. You may even ask the crew to turn the A/C down a bit. We did when it reached 68 degrees on board! The plumbing system runs on fresh water so there are none of the smells commonly associated with marine toilets. The reverse osmosis water system produces 225 gallons daily so there is plenty of water for drinking, showering and washing gear. As mentioned before, the guides are top-notch as is their equipment. Their 4-stroke engines power modern flats boats with flush decks, trim tabs and carbon fiber poles. A center console Carolina Skiff is available for nonanglers or for snorkeling forays. Kayaks are also available for anglers wishing to explore on their own.

Penny and Fred Wheeler run a tight ship. They are enthusiastic, personable, competent and very safe. They have a great deal of experience running charters in the Keys and Marquesas. They did a fantastic job and we are thrilled to be working with them. The meals onboard were superb and plentiful. This was a flawless trip with no complaints from anybody in our group. In fact, our group has already booked a return engagement next October.

Is this trip right for you? It should be your choice only if you love exploratory angling and understand the realities of raw, unquantified and rarely visited locales. There are no guarantees here in this land bordering The Horn. On this wild side of Andros, the weather may not cooperate, the wind may come from the west clouding the exterior flats or the creek that looked so good on the map just might not pan out. Simply put, the outcome is unknown. But isn't this the essence of fishing... or of any adventure. If you cannot agree to these terms, this trip is not right for you. But if you love to walk on the wild side, this trip was designed for you.

It was late June. The rivers had just begun to run clear. With all the recent rain, the prairie grasses were already almost knee deep. He was just one summer season shy of 55. The age when you are, as his grandmother used to say, "still sitting up and taking nourishment", but also an age when you are clear that the fuse is lit. This knowledge that life is not a dress rehearsal brings on a certain reshuffling of priorities to all but the most deluded of people.

He had been fly fishing since he was in single digits. He still needed wild water like some people need church. It was all part of him now. He long ago decided he would rather be in a river thinking of God than in church thinking of the river. He had devoted his life to these outdoor pursuits and lived in fear of the day when he would be forced to give it all up. He had never forgotten what an old man had once told him,

"Be careful of trying too hard to be something... 'cuz one day you'll wake up and you'll be it".

Well, he was IT... whatever IT was!

His friends thought he could see fish in some preternatural way. They were convinced that he was endowed with some super visual powers. He knew this wasn't true. After all, he wore glasses and now had some trouble tying on flies. He knew it was just something he had unconsciously practiced since he was a boy. He had learned to concentrate and focus... and he had learned to answer the call of his peripheral vision. He had refined these skills over the years. He did indeed see things that others didn't, but that was because his attention rarely strayed from the water. This is why he sometimes liked to fish alone... no distractions. He was able to integrate his hearing in this process. He could often hear trout rise and bonefish tail, usually when others couldn't. He thought this was amusing since his wife told him he was going deaf. She wanted him to get his hearing tested. He had refused

knowing that a certain selectivity of what he chose to process was at work here. He could hear his old lab whine at night when he needed to be let out, but somehow he couldn't hear his wife suggest a chore from another room. He liked to think there was a certain wisdom that came with age...

When he went fishing, he didn't actually fish as much as he used to. Instead he sought classic moments and spent the rest of the time watching, walking or napping. He loved the moments that distilled fishing to its essence. When in saltwater, he loved a rising tide which pushed him towards more and more shallow water. If he concentrated and ignored distractions in this "skinny" water, he just might find a bonefish rooting in the bottom's rich marl. Here in this world of flickering light, he ultimately sought bright bonefish tails. He loved to see them wave hypnotically in the poisonous atmosphere. Closer to home on his local streams and lakes, he was still transfixed by the appearance of a mayfly dun right on cue. It always focused his attention on the seams where river current met eddy. He was amazed that these events still excited him as they had when he had first begun fishing.

Things had, of course, changed a bit. Now, he didn't care how many fish he caught... yet he still wanted that first fish of the day just as much as ever. But once he had hooked up, he relaxed and just let the day flow. If he caught too many fish, he began to feel piggish and strangely, a bit of empathy for the fish. He knew this was sentimental gibberish especially when considering the intensity of his predatory instincts. He didn't understand it all, but he knew it was something that was just in him, like the need to breathe or swallow.

Seated on the edge of the long slick, he watched as the huge PMD spinners drifted by ignored and uneaten. He couldn't understand why the trout weren't gorging on these size 14 rusty colored adults. This just made no sense to him, but he knew it was no accident that none of this creek's trout were rising. As Einstein once said "God doesn't play dice with the universe". He too believed this and knew there was a reason why this sprinkling of mayflies sailed by unmolested. At times like this, he realized how much he liked to fish and how little he had really evolved. He might quit fishing hard after he caught a fish, but not right now. Now he really wanted to catch a fish... and soon.

"Man, it would be perfect if one big brown decided to snack on these spinners", he said, maybe even out loud. That's all he wanted, one fish, one hookup, one chance.

As if on cue, he sensed motion from the corner of his eye and squared his vision upstream as the ripples from a recent rise expanded and drifted downstream. He rolled his fly forward and snapped it into a backcast. One more false cast and the fly sped across the creek headed for the little dogleg that protected the rising trout from the main current. He knew his first cast was his best chance, so he took special care to finish off his cast with a reach upstream to eliminate any possible drag. The fly landed softly, then drifted deliciously toward the rise point. He loved this moment and smiled to himself, pleased that it all still seemed so important and fresh. Two more feet and the fly disappeared. He pulled his wrist up, carefully balancing his excitement with his experience. The fish came tight. The trout pulled hard for the undercut bank. He lowered his rod so it was parallel with the slick and swung right as hard as he dared. The fish abandoned the undercut and sprinted downstream punctuating his run with a leap and a few dozen head shakes. By the time he had worked the fish back upstream, it was all but over. He sat down on the bank again and unhooked the fly. He watched the big brown recover at his feet before he nudged it away with the tip of his wading boot.

"That was cool," he thought, knowing that today was now officially a success and he could get down to the serious business of not seriously fishing

But if there was another rise...

NEWS & NOTES...

Since our last newsletter, we have posted quite a few new trip reports on our website. To read these reports, go to www.anglingdestinations.com... then click "recent adventures". Make sure you remember to check in frequently. Someone in our office is always coming back from a fishing adventure with an interesting trip report. Here are a few of our most recent adventures:

- ▶ Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula for Backcountry Tarpon
- ▶ Great Inagua Island in the Bahamas
- ▶ Cosmoledo Atoll in the Seychelles
- ▶ Argentina's Ibera Marsh for Golden Dorado

With summer fast approaching, our thoughts have begun to drift to our local streams and some of the best trout fishing in all the world. Wyoming, Montana and Idaho have generally had adequate snow this winter. As a result, we're expecting a normal runoff and a great summer here in the American West. If you're looking for a great trip this summer, here are a few ideas:

In Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains, outfitter Rusty Bogers offers superb high country horsepack adventures through his **Flatiron Troutfitters**. A four hour ride will put you in a comfortable camp at 9000' of elevation and just a stone's throw from Wyoming's Cloud Peak Wilderness Area. This area offers some of Wyoming's best high country dry fly fishing for chunky cutthroat and rainbow trout. And if you're trying to teach a child to fish, you can catch a brook trout on almost every cast in the stream that babbles contentedly in front of camp. Snow rimmed alpine lakes, perfect small streams and a well-organized camp make this THE perfect family adventure. Flatiron Troutfitters is just rough enough to let you know you did something special, yet easy enough to keep domestic tranquility intact. What a great way to create memories with your kids!

If you love Montana, we also offer a great new program in the Bozeman area. We can customize an itinerary to include the **Gallatin, Yellowstone and Madison Rivers**, as well as numerous spring and private ranch creeks. We can arrange accommodations to include everything from traditional lodges to private cabins. With great guides, this program is perfect for families and small groups looking for a unique "step above" experience.

Further north, troutophiles should consider the area around **Fernie, British Columbia**. If you love fishing for wild, native cutthroat trout, this may be the best spot in North America. In this beautiful area, the cutt's are big, strong and readily take dry flies. In addition to over fifty fishable miles on the Elk River, there are numerous tributaries to the Elk including Michel Creek, the Fording River and a few others whose names we won't mention here.

This is just a small sampling of the great trout trips we offer. If you would like to hear more, give us a call today and we'll help you plan a great summer adventure!

Hell's Bay Hopper



Hook:	Gamakatsu SC-15, Size 1 - 1/0
Thread:	Black
Legs:	Round Black Rubber
Lip:	1/8" Fly Foam
Tail:	Arctic Fox Fur
Body:	Regular Length Estaz

Tying Instructions

Tie in Arctic fox fur tail using a post technique so that the tail extends from the hook shank at approximately 45 degrees away from the bend of the hook. Since this fly rides hook point up, this is a critical step. Then wrap the estaz forward from the tail towards the eye of the hook and tie off. Tie in two rubber legs in a crossing pattern such that they form an "X", sticking out from the body of the fly. Tie in a properly sized strip of fly foam facing the bend of the hook on the underside of the hook shank and finish off. Fold the fly foam forward past the eye of the hook, fold back onto itself and tie off just behind the eye of the hook. Remember, this fly rides with the hook point up, so your fly foam is tied on the underside of the hook shank! Finish the fly with several tight wraps of thread at the eye of the hook. This creates a two layered foam lip which helps to keep the hook point up similar to a bend back, only this fly rides on the surface. The Hell's Bay Hopper is a great redfish, baby tarpon and snook fly. It lands softly and skitters like a wounded baitfish on the surface. You can reach Captain Johnny Miller at 306-672-4226. Captain Miller is a full time guide in the Mosquito Lagoon on the east coast of Florida. He specializes in shallow water backcountry fishing.

SOME FISHING TIPS...

In our quest to deal with all things pertaining to angling travel, we're going to take on a tough one in this article, although we may offend some people in the process. Lately, however, we've been getting an increasing number of phone calls concerning the issue of tipping. Based on these conversations (and trip experiences of our own), we can tell you that there are many anglers who are not very happy with some guides and lodge owners. We think it's time to take the lid off this nasty little issue.

We repeatedly hear two things: First, anglers feel that many guides now simply expect big tips. These anglers do not appreciate this attitude, as they see tipping as a reward, not an entitlement. Secondly, these anglers feel that many lodge owners have made tips something close to mandatory and because of this, many anglers feel used and misled by published prices. We feel it's time to address some of these concerns and at least put the problem "on the table", in hopes that both guides and lodges will see the other side. Destination angling can be an expensive proposition. The airline tickets, guide and lodge fees, not to mention the tackle, all add up. It just seems like bad business policy on the part of the lodges to have anglers depart with a bad taste in their mouth because of some short-sighted tipping policy.

So with the hope of giving voice to these concerns... here goes our rant:



The last time we checked, "tips" were given to a guide or lodge as a gesture for exceptional service or as a reward for a job well done. It seems, however, that the definition of tipping has changed. For example, we recently had occasion to visit a lodge in the Bahamas. To our great surprise, when given our final bill, our invoice had a 15% gratuity added on. Here's a news flash... this is not a tip. There is nothing optional about it. It is a required payment, and as such, it is absurd. If this is what you are going to charge, tell us upfront, before we choose your lodge. We even had one lodge owner tells us that customers were expected to tip a certain amount or they would not be allowed to come back! The question is, do we even want to go in the first place given this attitude? We know that lodge employees work hard, but we don't like the idea of mandatory tips.

Are lodge owners underpaying their staff and getting by via a "promise" of big tips? If so, this is a very underhanded way of supplementing the "payroll" to bring employee wages up to reasonable level. In this situation, your gratuity ceases to be a gratuity and becomes part of the price of the trip. This practice is deceptive and the lodges that use this tactic need to change their ways! If you are advertising price X to be competitive, but really requiring price Y at the end, you are practicing to deceive. We suggest you STOP IT!

And while we're on a good old fashioned rant, here's a salvo leveled at some guides: We have often seen, as a destination becomes popular, guides who were once happy to have a good job doing something they liked, become jaded and lazy, yet still expecting the big tip at the end of the day. Here's another news flash: You are not entitled to a tip. It is an OPTIONAL reward for a job well done! Theoretically, clients have already paid for your services upfront. Don't expect to automatically receive more. You must earn a tip. If you are not getting paid enough, take it up with management. It is a gift over and above payment due for services. It is NOT an automatic payment at the end of uninspired day.

Our clients frequently ask us how much to tip. Our response is that you should tip a guide based on how hard he works to find fish and what he does to help you. Tipping is not necessarily a function of numbers of fish caught, but more so of the effort put forth in the process. Some of the biggest tips we have ever given have been on those tough fishing days when our guide has had to work exceptionally hard to give us every possible shot. We appreciate hard work and think tips are usually warranted. But the amount should be our CHOICE.

Let us repeat, we are not against tips. We are just sick and tired of the assumption that a tip is going to be given or that it should automatically be added to your invoice. It is so refreshing to be with guides who do not expect a tip, but instead work hard to help their guests get the most out of what the tide, wind, and weather offer up on any given day. Like most things in life, attitude is everything. The good guides (and the ones we recommend) understand this, and realize that a tip is something that they have to work to earn. We encourage you to talk with guides and lodge owners about this and let them know what you think. If you say nothing, things will continue to head south.

Great Inagua Island

This is the next installment in our series on the various islands in the Bahamas. In this issue, we'll visit Great Inagua Island. Inagua is the third largest and most southerly island in the chain. This island is rarely visited, yet offers one very good guide and perhaps the Bahamas' best shot at a Grand Slam. Inagua is perfect for winter trips when the more northerly islands are plagued by cold fronts.

The early explorers named islands for many reasons. Ragged Island was named for its rugged coast. San Salvador was named for the elation felt by Columbus at his much anticipated landfall in the new world. Other islands took their names from the bounty they provided. The Dry Tortugas produced succulent turtle meat but no water... in a salty sea peppered with arid islands, few ports held this precious product. To the Spanish sailing in the southern Bahamas, agua was critical and the island of Inagua refreshed many a crew anchored so far from their home port.

Inagua is the third largest and most southerly island in the Bahamas chain. It lies 350 miles away from the casinos and hubbub of Nassau. On a clear day, the mountains of Cuba can be seen to the west across the Old Bahama Channel. Inagua's climate of sparse rainfall and consistent trade winds creates rich salt pans from which Morton Salt harvests over a million tons a year. For many years, avid birdwatchers made up the majority of tourists that visited this remote island. Anxious to see cranes, herons, rare Bahamian parrots, burrowing owls, terns and stunning tropic

birds, these ornithologists knew that the island's briny interior supported a huge biomass of shrimp and was therefore the perfect habitat for an amazing array of birds. Perhaps the most dramatic avian visitors are the 60,000 scarlet pink West Indian flamingos that come to Inagua to feed on the mollusks, water snails and brine shrimp that make mature birds so brilliantly beautiful. In 1959, these ornithologists farsightedly established, through an act of parliament, the Bahamas National Trust. Four years later, the trust established the Inagua National Park which took charge of over 287 square miles which covers not quite half the island.

In the ensuing years, a few of the park's visitors were also anglers. They were surprised and delighted to find good numbers of flightless characters weaving their way among the mangroves. They ultimately returned to pursue the tarpon, snook, bonefish and permit they had spotted... and they kept quiet about their discovery. Many returned year after year enjoying what may be the most unique fishery in all the Bahamas.

The island's vast interior lagoon is officially named Lake Windsor, but to the locals it is the "Pond". The "Pond" is a vast maze of mangrove wetlands some 8 miles wide by 20 miles long. Open lagoons are connected by secret tunnels. Here, anglers stoop under cathedraled

arches as the branches of red mangroves claw at the sides of the skiff. A good guide not only knows where to find fish, but how to get home, making his services essential for both angling success and safety.

The tarpon here run 15-80 lbs. Larger fish are often sighted. All the tarpon fishing is done by sight in very shallow water. Landing fish here can be difficult, but the takes and fights are chaotic as the tarpon "go airborne" when hooked in these shallow waters. Good populations of permit prowl the mangrove edges and snook

are carpeted to mute sounds. Our guide trailers to the "pond" and also to the north and south exterior bonefish flats. There is much room to explore on Inagua especially on the south side which is a seemingly endless series of bays and white sand flats lightly sprinkled with mangrove clusters and sparse turtle grass. These exterior flats hold larger than average bonefish (typically 3-4 lbs.) and each year Inagua serves up a few 30+ inch bonefish to some lucky anglers. Strategically spaced along this coast are a few hidden creeks with narrow entrances that widen

into beautiful, hard-bottomed interior flats. These creeks offer some of the best fishing for tailing bones in all the Bahamas. If these flats don't get your motor running, you're in the wrong sport!

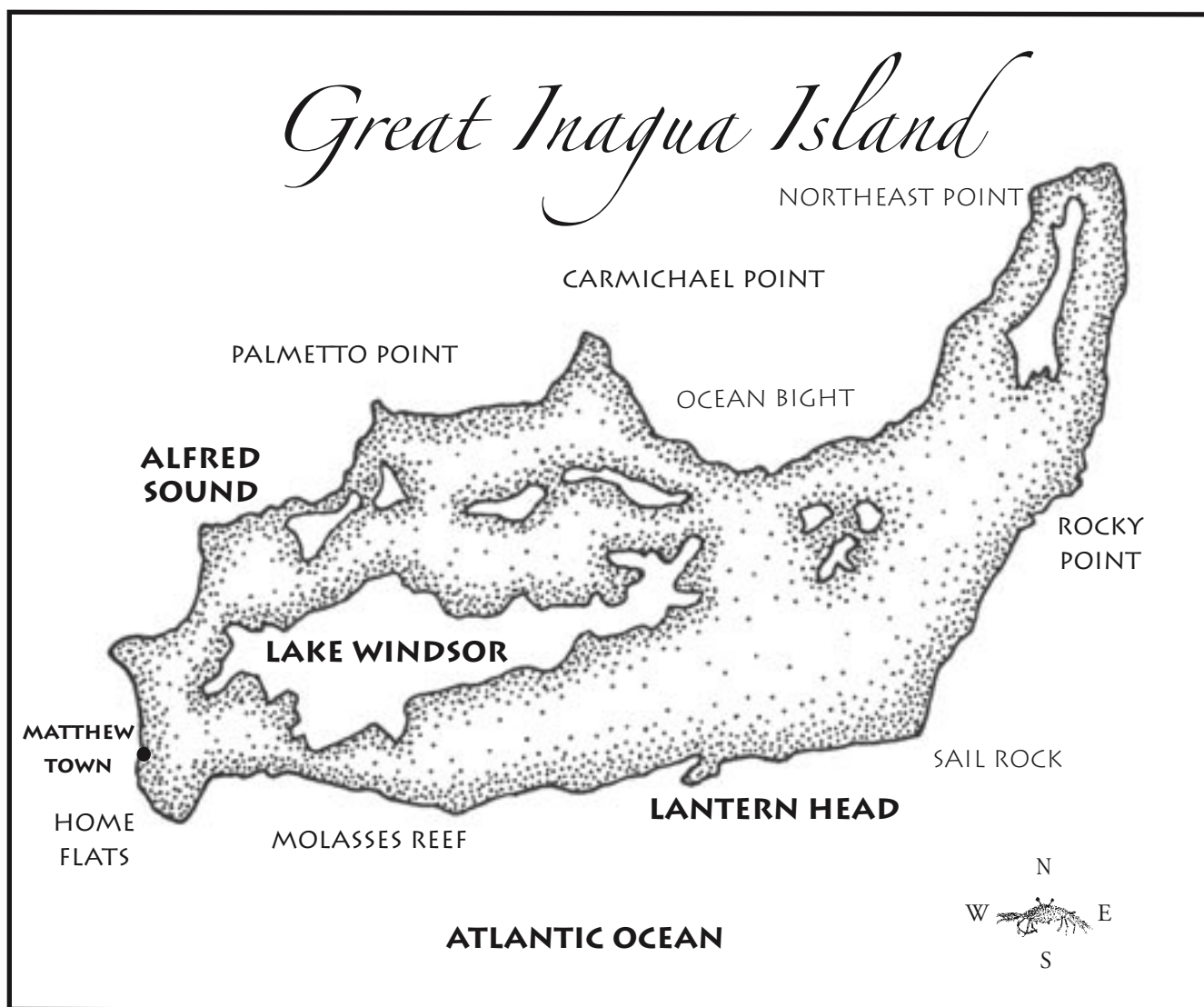
While permit are often seen on this south shore, it is on the north shore near Alfred Sound where one of the most reliable permit fisheries exists in all the Bahamas. Here, it is rare not to see at least one permit each day and on many occasions, we have seen 6-10 in a single afternoon! If no permit show up, the bonefishing at Alfred Sound is excellent on beautiful hard-bottomed flats. In

addition, our expert guide has a few secret spots tucked away up the creeks that are great for a few snapper and grouper.

The accommodations are in the form of seaside, air-conditioned duplex apartments. Each apartment has two bedrooms, a full kitchen and a combination living/dining room complete with a satellite TV. An outside barbecue area provides a dramatic place for an evening cocktail and comes fully equipped with a spectacular sunset scheduled for your pleasure each day at dusk.

Anglers purchase their own supplies for breakfast at the local store in Matthew Town. It is within easy walking distance of the apartments. Breakfast is not included in the package price. Lunches are included and are taken inbetween casts. Dinners are catered and include fish, chicken, conch chowder and chops.

One more word of caution: Because Inagua is somewhat difficult to reach and because the island requires a certain flexibility of attitude, we recommend Inagua to experienced and hearty anglers only. But for those intrepid souls, there is no other island in the Bahamas, let alone the third largest island in the Bahamas, where you can have the whole place to yourself during your stay. Inagua should be on every intrepid angler's list of must-do spots.



secretively lurk under the leafy green fringe. Bonefish schools are found on these interior flats, but they are not the primary quarry here. Bonefish are better pursued on the north and south perimeter of the island. In fact, there is a beautiful, white sand bonefish flat within walking distance of picturesque Matthew Town. Just start near the lighthouse that was built in 1870 and you'll find a perfect spot for after hours fishing. We have spent many an evening on these "home" flats catching fish after fish in the fading evening light. Great entertainment between sips on a cold Kalik beer!

If we have any trepidation about Inagua's fantastic fishery, it concerns the number of quality guides available. Inagua is a remote and secluded area far from the Bahamas' more well known bonefish centers. There is no tradition of guiding here and while some call themselves guides, there is only one man who truly qualifies on this island that absolutely requires a knowledgeable leader. Our guide is an Inagua native who has been fishing this area for over 20 years. This experienced fellow would be considered an excellent guide on any island in the Bahamas.

For durability and versatility, we use aluminum, tunnel-hulled flats boats with 40 hp. motors. The casting decks are large with no obstructions. Decks and floors

KAMCHATKA FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

Seems like every year, there is a hot new river "discovered" on Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula. First it was the Zhupanova, then the Kolpakova, then the Sedanka. This discovery is followed by a flourish of activity as if this is the only river to fish in Kamchatka. All this attention is focused on only a very narrow chunk of real estate and what was exceptional, becomes somewhat sullied by all the attention and subsequent fishing pressure. Worse still, all this attention exacerbates the political struggle between the various Russian outfitters who are all vying for permits and access to these "hot" fisheries. It has become a cumbersome and much too competitive a process. We have never wanted to "rule the world" at Angling Destinations, but merely offer the best possible experiences for our clients.

As a result, we're going to take a somewhat different tack concerning Kamchatka (and its fantastic fishery) in the future. We have decided to step out of the mainstream and let the big boys duke it out. We have decided to work with some of the smaller cutting edge companies who, like us, focus on R & D and stay ahead of the pack. This philosophy simply states: do your job, offer great trips and anglers will find you. This has worked for us in the Bahamas, the Seychelles, the Yucatan.... just about every place we've tried it!

The small companies that we are working with are very experienced in Kamchatka. They are well connected, understand all the ins and outs of doing business on the peninsula and have secured excellent reputations through hard work and diligence. These companies have asked us not to name rivers... actually they have insisted on it. They have been flying "under the radar" for years and want to keep it that way. These organizations have been in Russia since it first opened up to Westerners. As such, they are the most experienced outfitters in Kamchatka. With them, we too are going to "fly under the radar" to both preserve the quality of the fishing and offer the best experiences available on the incredible Kamchatka Peninsula.

We will be offering both fixed camps and Alaskan-style float trips with these outfitters. Some of the fixed camp opportunities will use rafts and single catarafts to float downriver between the campsites, while other trips will use boats equipped with jet motors to explore the waters both above and below one established campsite.

We suggest Alaskan-style float trips for the more adventuresome and fixed camps for those seeking more amenities and a bit less physical involvement. Whatever the experience you choose, we will promise top-notch equipment, experienced outfitters, great Russian food and some of the best fishing on our planet for rainbow trout, grayling, exotic char and Pacific salmon. So if you are the adventuresome sort who seeks only great angling and prefers, as Will Rogers once said, "to always drink upstream of the herd", give us a call today and we'll fill you in on all the details.

ALASKA IS IT WORTH GOING?

We're asked all the time if Alaska lives up to its hype. With over fifty trips logged to Alaska and countless hours spent on its river and streams, our answer comes quickly and easily. "Absolutely!" If you have never been to Alaska... go! It should be on every diehard anglers must-do list! We believe that nowhere else in North America can one experience such incredibly prolific fishing in such a spectacular remote setting.

The second question we get asked frequently is: "When is the best time to go?" This answer is more complicated! Let's just say that salmon operate according to their own rhythms, but generally, king (Chinook), red (sockeye) and dog (chum) salmon are in the rivers from late June through the end of July. Pink (humpy) salmon show up on even numbered years only. Silver (coho) salmon begin their migration in August and continue to enter fresh water well into September. The fish that follow the salmon and the natural chum line of roe and decomposing salmon flesh are dolly varden, grayling, Arctic char and rainbow. These fish are caught throughout the season, June through September. Early and late are considered the best times for trophy rainbows; that's June before the salmon run and in September after the last of the silvers have entered freshwater. But large trout are caught all summer long so there is always the possibility of hooking into that trophy 'bow. If variety is your desire, August is your month because then the greatest numbers of salmon and freshwater species are available.

The other question we frequently answer is: "What are my options?" To help answer this question, we have divided Alaskan fishing opportunities into four categories to help you decide which experience is best for you. The four types of experiences available are:

1) Full Fly-Out Lodges

These lodges offer top notch accommodations and five-star dining. Every day anglers fly to remote rivers and streams. Equipment, guides and all amenities are top-notch. Our fly-out lodges provide one of the finest angling experiences available anywhere in the world.

2) Fixed Lodges

Fixed lodges use jet boats to ferry anglers from the lodge to a "hot spot" each day. These lodges are located on very reliable rivers. Fly-outs may be optional.

3) Fixed Camps

While more rustic than the fixed lodges, these camps offer the same quality fishing, excellent meals and comfortable lodging at a much more affordable price.

4) Float Trips

Usually camps are set up each night as you move down the river. There are two anglers to each raft with a guide/boatman. Although float trips require more effort, they provide unlimited fishing time and a deeper involvement with the wilderness.

So if you're considering Alaska, give us a call and we'll get you to the right place at the right time!

SEYCHELLES 2004 COSMOLEDO TRIP REPORT

If you haven't heard about the flats fishing in the Seychelles by now, you've either been in prison, are very new to the sport or have been working way too hard. We'll assume you're not Martha Stuart so just to summarize once again, the angling on the flats of the remote atolls in the Seychelles for bonefish, blue fin trevally and giant trevally is the best in the world... period. If you want more info on this fantastic fishery, go to our website at www.anglingdestinations.com click "recent adventures" and catch up on all our trip reports concerning our liveaboard ship the *Indian Ocean Explorer*. You'll also find a brand new trip report on our just concluded March 2004 trip to Cosmoledo Atoll.

While we'll resist the temptation to talk more about the flats fishing on Cosmoledo Atoll in this issue, we will tell you briefly about our offshore experiences this year. If you will remember, last year we barely scratched the surface, yet tallied catches of wahoo, sailfish and a myriad of other reef dwellers. This year we came better armed! We brought a mountain of conventional tackle, big fly rods up to 13 weights, miles of strong leaders, a gazillion bluewater flies and lures... and a will to do battle with whatever Cosmoledo had to offer.

The blue water edge that surrounds the atoll starts just 200 yards off the sand and rock shoreline where the color changes dramatically from a perfect turquoise to a promising azure deep blue. Here we caught wahoo up to 50 lbs, yellow fin tuna, dog tooth tuna, sailfish up to 110 lbs. (we even had a double), Chinese grouper (there are three varieties and we caught all three), French grouper, queenfish, Aldabra trevally, red bass, jobfish and a myriad of other weird ocean dwellers. To be sure, Cosmoledo offers probably the best bonefishing in the known angling world, but what makes this atoll truly remarkable is the diversity of habitat and species available. In total, we caught twenty different species of fish and seventeen with fly rods!

With reels burned to their limits, mono stretched thin and hooks bent straight, we battled tuna, wahoo and sailfish often just off the bow of the IOE. In one photo, the shore of Cosmoledo is so prominent it looks as if we landed the sailfish on the flats! In another instance, we were able to motor back to the mothership for photos before a big wahoo's color even had a chance to fade one bit. Try that anywhere else in the world!

When we reluctantly steamed away from the atoll only a short week after our arrival, we returned with sore forearms, a cat's cradle of destroyed 8/0 flies and of course, the obligatory broken rods, but more importantly, we returned with some simply outstanding memories. Our wildest dreams had been met and our collective suspicions had been confirmed beyond any doubt: the oceanic edge of Cosmoledo is every bit as prolific as the interior lagoon flats... just a different cast of characters! If you want more information on how to sign up for a trip to Cosmoledo Atoll, give us a call today!

Catch and Release... and Live!

Here's an idea that comes from Ricardo Burrows of Great Abaco island in the Bahamas. While filming an episode of ESPN's "Spanish Fly" with Jose Wejebe at his Rickmon Bonefish Lodge last February, Ricardo demonstrated his unique life-saving technique for just-caught bonefish. Ricardo had shown us this technique a few years back and just like Jose, we had never seen this done before. We were amazed at how well it worked! If you didn't see the show, give us a call and we'll try and get you a copy. But here's the technique in a nutshell:

Bonefish can often be exhausted when landed. In this state, after being released, they often fall prey to aggressive sharks or 'cudas who sense an opportunity for a "free lunch". If you want to give the next bonefish you release a better chance, hold your fish in the water near the bottom. With two fingers simply rub the top of his skull with three inch strokes back and forth. The bonefish will "freeze" and appear hypnotized. In the meantime, he will continue to pump life-giving water through his gills. In a few moments, much of the paralyzing lactic acid that had collected in his muscles from the fight will be dissipated. You can continue this stroking until the fish regains his strength. When you stop rubbing his head, he will slowly "come back", then swim off, perhaps a bit wiser for the adventure. Try it... but be sure to look around first for 'cudas and sharks on the prowl.

YUCATAN VILLA AT TULUM

PERFECT SPOT FOR COUPLES

Unfortunately, when fishermen are making plans to visit a tropical destination, nonanglers are often not included. This happens for two reasons. First, the cost of taking nonanglers to a fishing lodge is generally prohibitive. Secondly, there is little if anything for them to do. As you know, here at Angling Destinations we have diligently sought out good spots for nonangling "significant others" and in that spirit, here's a good one!

Tres Palmeras is an upscale, four bedroom villa located south of Cancun on the Caribbean. There are two identical master suites (with king beds) and two additional bedrooms each having two queen beds in them. Each bedroom has its own private bathroom featuring hand painted Talavera tile and a Roman shower. Each bedroom has a patio or balcony with an ocean view, air conditioning, satellite TV and a combination DVD/VCR player. The house has an extensive collection of the latest movies and there is a media room with a 50" HDTV and Karaoke machine. The kitchen has granite counter tops and features all of the latest appliances including dishwasher, gas range/oven and a side-by-side fridge. The large living room features built-in Bancos and a 50-foot ceiling with arched brick bovidas. The circular dining room table seats 8 comfortably. There are spacious covered decks on both the ground floor and second floor with built-in speakers. The tiled flat roof patio seats over a dozen people and has a wet bar and fabulous view of both Tankah and Solomon Bays. The negative edge pool with swim up bar stools has a "beach" area to lounge in the water and read a book. A lit Palapa has a sand floor with hammocks and swing chairs. Maid service is provided daily. The one week package (generally Saturday to Friday) includes breakfast and dinner daily. Anglers' lunches are packed and taken between casts while a buffet lunch will be served at the villa for nonfishermen.

The fishermen will enjoy five full days of fishing through Boca Paila Lodge. Optional fly-outs to world renowned Casa Blanca Lodge can also be arranged. Fly outs will add \$400 per day to the package (or an extra \$100 per person per day with four fishing.) The drive to Boca Paila will take one hour or less (depending on the condition of the road) and the 20 minute flights to Casablanca will be out of the Tulum airstrip, located 5 minutes from the villa. Fisherman should be home by 6:00 each evening, just in time for cocktails and appetizers by the pool. Nonanglers will have the following area attractions to choose from and will be on their own unless excursions are arranged at additional cost:

- The city of Playa Del Carmen is just 30 miles away and offers international dining and nightlife. Also, the quaint town of Tulum Puebla is only 10 minutes away.
- A dozen cenotes (underground rivers) are a short drive from the villa. They include Grand Cenote and Hidden Worlds Cenote. The charming Casa Cenote is a half mile walk from the villa and offers a beachside restaurant.
- Snorkeling, scuba diving and cenote dive tours are readily available. Snorkeling at Xel-Ha is less than 15 minutes away and Xcaret is a 40-minute drive. There you can swim with dolphins, walk the nature trails or snorkel with beautiful tropical fish.
- Just 20 minutes away is the shopping and dining area of Puerto Aventura. Nearby, are the gorgeous beaches and quaint restaurants of Punta Piedra.

- Tres Palmeras is within easy reach of some of the most famous and spectacular of the Mayan ruins such as Tulum, Cobá and Chichén Itzá.
- Playacar has two golf courses that are open to the public and tennis can be arranged at many of the local hotels and spas.

The cost for one full week is \$14,500.00. This price includes 5 fully guided days of fishing for four anglers with two to a boat. This works out to \$3650.00 per couple with a party of eight and under \$5000.00 per couple with a party of six making it one of the real bargains in the fishing world! The villa will accommodate up to four couples. This package is for adults only and does not include children.

If you're looking for a great fishing spot for you and lots to do for your nonfishing guests and family members, please take a close look at this opportunity. While nonangling guests are choosing from the many diversions the area offers, you can be experiencing world class angling. You'll come home to a happy crew each evening and doesn't that make the fishing all that much more fun?

WELCOME ABOARD TODD SABINE JOINS A. D.

We are delighted to announce that a new member has joined the team at Angling



Destinations. California native and Colorado transplant, Todd Sabine comes to us with a wealth of angling experience and expertise. Todd has been an avid fly fisher since his early teens. He has spent the majority of his life pursuing trout, salmon and steelhead throughout the American West, British Columbia and Alaska, Todd has guided extensively in Alaska and the Rockies and has most recently specialized on ultra selective trout on small flies along the Front Range of Colorado. Todd was a go-to guide at Elktrout Lodge in Kremmling, Colorado, the 1999 Orvis Flyfishing Lodge of the Year. Todd further enhanced his excellent reputation when he changed venues and helped make The Blue Quill Angler in Evergreen, Colorado, the Orvis 2000 Flyfishing Guide Service of the Year.

The last few years, Todd was the head guide at The Flyfisher Ltd. in Denver, Colorado and instructed other guides at the Orvis Guide School in Durango, Colorado. Todd is a master with both single-handed and spey rods and has a great relaxed teaching style. Todd has worked

for us as a trip host in the Seychelles aboard the *Indian Ocean Explorer*, although we're not sure we should properly term this as work! He has also hosted trips in British Columbia since 1998 for steelhead and is a recognized expert on this prized species. Todd is also a superb fly tier and is credited with creating many innovative patterns for salmon, trout and steelhead. Many of these benchmark patterns are now commercially produced and are used widely by in-the-know anglers. It should be obvious that Todd is a widely respected and quite talented angler and guide. We are delighted to have him aboard and know that Angling Destinations will provide Todd with an opportunity to, like us, successfully disguise his obsession for fly fishing as an actual career. Todd has two children. Will is 11 and Samantha is 14. Todd, we look forward to working (and fishing) with you!

JOLLY RANCHER

"Jeff tossed me a small plastic bag filled with hard candies. I tucked the zip-lock in my shirt pocket. Stanford slid the throttle forward and we streaked towards shore, the 4-stroke motor barely audible on this soft, still morning. We quickly motored up a creek, then cut the engine scattering bonefish in five feet of gin-clear water draining out over a mocha colored bottom. The sky was overcast with rain clouds scudding in from the west. The tide was high and a light wind slightly scuffed the flat. These were poor conditions to find bonefish. With the only other option not to fish at all, we sought out the lees of the mangroves where we had a small "window" of calm water. We hoped to see fish in these unscuffed areas. I hopped out of the boat and waded east along the edge of a long low, mostly submerged cay. I waded quietly on a hard coral bottom riddled with crab hidey-holes. Brian waded north along the other edge, while Larry went with Stanford to pole another cay.

I immediately spotted a small bonefish in the calm window. He was fearless and aggressive and pinned my fly to the bottom almost the moment it hit the shallow shore water. "Maybe this won't be too bad." I thought as I reloaded and watched the just released 3 lb. bone swim away. As I lost track of my previous catch, I spotted a small disturbance a few yards back in the mangroves. A big tail spiked up, then flapped over comically as a mud appeared at the base of a small mangrove shoot. I followed the tail as it disappeared only to see it poke up once again a few feet further through the mangroves. The bushes were too dense to even consider a cast. I popped a watermelon Jolly Rancher and paused to consider my options. Maybe I could spook him. A piece of coral well thrown might spook him just enough to cause him to swim out. Then I could get a shot. I squatted down to search for a piece of coral, but as I did, I lost sight of the fish. If I lost the fish, a piece of coral was of no use to me.

Then a thought came to me; a thought so brilliant and so lucid that I now consider it to be perhaps the pinnacle of my angling career. An idea that I congratulated myself for even before I had tried it. Emboldened by my obvious genius, I took the Jolly Rancher from my mouth and holding it like a dart, pitched it to the left and just slightly beyond the fish. At the splash, my bonefish darted about two feet then turned and swam the 10 feet to the mangrove's junction with the calm slick. I tossed my little silly legs gotcha and he pounced, flaring his dorsal fin and tail as he sucked the fly back toward his crushers. I struck and he ran towards deeper water. Yes, I landed the fish, but all that is meaningless. What was important was that I had devised a new angling technique – the Jolly Rancher Flanking Maneuver and I was now a smiling mass of self-congratulations, laughter and pure homo sapien piscatorial pleasure. I donated another Jolly Rancher further down the beat and it worked like a charm with similar results. This one was grape. While I haven't tried any other flavors, I feel confident most will work. But if considering this advanced maneuver, please remove the wrapper first." SSH Journal Entry... October 15, 2003 Andros Island, Bahamas

◆ BAHAMAS UPDATE ◆

Perhaps you saw on ESPN the two episodes of "The Spanish Fly" we helped put together with host Jose Wejebe. When Jose called us requesting a suggestion for a show on bonefishing in the Bahamas, we didn't take much time to give him an answer. We told Jose that Sandy Point, **Ricardo Burrows** and his **Rickmon Bonefish Lodge**, offered a sure winner. Given the fickle nature of fishing, we knew there was one man who could not only do a great job, but also make the show enjoyable to watch. We subsequently hooked up Jose and Ricardo. The rest is history! Thanks for all the phone calls, we appreciate your comments. In addition, we were delighted when the executive producer of the series called to tell us that these episodes were two of the top five shows in the 10 years since "The Spanish Fly" first aired. Were we delighted? Absolutely... but we were not surprised. We knew Ricardo would do a superb job. So if you're looking for a great bonefish destination too, give us a call! Rickmon is a jewel and you can bet that if it's good enough for an experienced angler like Jose, it must be pretty darn good!

As described earlier in this issue, our Andros Island West Side mothership, the **Outpost**, is living up to all our expectations. We have completely filled this spring's schedule and early reports filtering back to us predict continued success. These reports not only confirm that the West Side of Andros is indeed a virgin fishery, but they reinforce our opinion that the ship's captain and crew are the best we have ever worked with. You can fly directly from Ft. Lauderdale to Andros, board the ship and spend your time exploring what may be the Bahamas' best bonefish habitat. If you are at all interested, we strongly urge you to call us as the Fall schedule is already starting to fill with repeat bookings.

Scott's recent trip last October to **Great Inagua Island** with writer Jon Cave was a great success despite some weird weather (see our website, "recent adventures" for the write-up). Our guide knows this pristine fishery extremely well. He is also the only qualified guide on the island, so if you can manage to schedule some time with him via Angling Destinations, you can have the third largest island in the Bahamas all to yourself! Not only are there lots of bonefish on the island's lightly fished flats, but Great Inagua has the most predictable tarpon fishery in the Bahamas. Tarpon 15 to 80 pounds live in good numbers in the big interior "Pond". This "Pond", properly called Lake Windsor, is a huge estuary and on good weather days, it's not uncommon to jump several big fish. And this isn't even the island's biggest secret! Give us a call and we'll tell you about the island's opportunities for permit. If you're looking for a Grand Slam, you may want to take a look at Jon Cave's article in the next issue of **Fly Fishing in Saltwater Magazine** for more information.

We were once again very impressed by the guides at **Tranquility Hill Bonefish Lodge** near Behring Point on Andros Island. Ivan Neymour and his son Dwain do an excellent job guiding anglers in this legendary

fishery that offers plenty of big (and often somewhat sophisticated) bonefish. If you are thinking of heading to the North Bight to take a shot at these bruisers, make sure you have a guy like Ivan or Dwain behind you on the poling platform.

Heading south on Andros Island, returning anglers are reporting that the change in ownership at **Bair's Lodge** is having very positive results. As expected, the legacy of excellence at Bair's continues and in many cases, has even improved especially concerning decor, ambiance and attitude. They also plan to add one room so they can accommodate eight anglers for the 2004/2005 season. We are well aware that more anglers means more pressure and that this can often spell problems for certain areas.



But in this case, we know that South Andros is a huge fishery and we have been assured that the flats will be rotated in an effort to spread the pressure over as wide an area as possible. We are now hoping that folks who have always wanted to give Bair's Lodge a try, but were not able to find an opening, will now be able to experience this great fishery.

Full Moons 2004	
January 7	July 31
February 6	August 30
March 6	September 28
April 5	October 28
May 4	November 26
June 3	December 26
July 2	January 25

diverse and superb. We have many anglers who would prefer to return to Crooked Island year in and year out. But like us, they feel that either the attitude or the management must change before they will risk more of their precious fishing days at Pittstown Point. In the meantime, anglers can experience great fishing with

As we reported in our last newsletter, we decided to call a moratorium on sending anglers to **Pittstown Point on Crooked Island** until some changes concerning the management's fulfillment of trip details are made. It is undeniable that the location is outstanding and the fishery is

guides like Clinton Scavella and Michael Carroll by using either Frank and Ruth's Guesthouse or the lovely Royal Palm Villas for accommodations.

Here's some potentially exciting news that we just came across: At press time, reliable sources have told us that **Pittstown Point** may have a new owner by next Fall's fishing season. We are hoping that this potential new ownership signals a change in direction for this strategically located resort. We are anxious for our clients to once again enjoy this beautiful destination under the watchful eye of an attentive management team. We will keep abreast of this situation and fill you in on how this all works out in our next newsletter.

Recent trip reviews of the angling opportunities and of manager **Leslie Knowles** and his staff at the newly re-opened **Acklins Island Lodge** have been excellent. Not only has the bonefishing been great as expected, but several anglers have seen good numbers of permit in certain locations. One recent group of six had over twenty quality shots and hooked and landed four permit in one day! It seems that the unexplored southern flats of Acklins hold more than just bonefish! We should also mention that Les offers some of the best cooking you'll find anywhere in the islands. If your looking for a remote destination with all the amenities, this is it!

For those looking to combine great fishing and a family vacation, we have had great results with our rental homes on **Long Island** this winter. We have rented these homes ourselves and found without exception that our wives and children have greatly enjoyed the sugar white sand beaches and great snorkeling found "down south" on Long Island. Quality guides are available, as well as some great "do it yourself" fishing that you can enjoy inbetween family time. The island is quaint and the locals are friendly. If cooking is not on your list of vacation priorities, there are several good places to eat in nearby Deadman's Cay or we can arrange a cook to prepare meals for you.

This is a great vacation idea and cheaper than you might think!

Former Bahamian Olympic athlete, Iram Lewis, has his new lodge up and running on **Water Cay**. Located smack dab in the middle of Grand Bahama's legendary north side flats, Water Cay is quiet and removed from the big city hub-bub, yet still very easy to reach from Freeport. This lodge has comfortable accommodations, experienced guides like Sidney Thomas and Ishmael Pinder, as well as some great bonefishing out the front door. Anglers that have been looking for a reasonably priced, quality destination that is easy to get to need look no further.

And finally, please don't forget our new self-guided program on remote **Mayaguana Island**. This island is still virtually unfished and while its flats are somewhat limited, the fish are big, naive and no one is there! For a very reasonable price, self-sufficient anglers will receive air-conditioned accommodations, daily transport to and from the flats, meals and a map to the area. This trip is certainly not for everyone, but if you can see fish well, like to wade and don't mind paddling a canoe to reach the best flats, this trip offers some great bonefishing at a terrific price.



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Explore the angling world on adventures run by fishermen for fishermen...

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