



Fly-Fishing Texas

Advertising Supplement

Summer 2007



A NEAR OFFSHORE ADVENTURE

"Look at those birds working a few miles up the beach. Let's go, it doesn't look too rough," said Eric Kraimer, as he headed his friend's skiff north.

In a few minutes, he found himself casting furiously to what looked like a half-submerged piece of plywood with a flock of gulls diving on it. "It kept changing shapes and then there was a lot of white-water flying."

The adventure continued. "Those fish are getting the super-size drive-through special," he said. "Look at the size of that shark! I don't think I can cast through the birds."

Kraimer had found an ocean fly-fisher's dream. There were sharks, tarpon and mackerel all feeding on the bait ball just off the beach on South Padre Island.

More and more fly-fishermen are heading to the beachfronts, passes and jetties of Texas each summer with the long rod. In search of something that will fight a little bit harder and faster, more often than not, they find it.

Because they come in so close to our beaches and are numerous, little tunny (bonito) rank as the easiest and most common of the offshore species to access. To find the knuckle-busters, fly-anglers look for working birds with tight

patches of frothing water underneath. Once spotted, they run upwind and drift down into the school casting small glass minnows imitating fly patterns. The key to getting bit, fly-anglers say, is to move the fly as fast as possible. Some place the rod under their arm and use a two-handed retrieve.

The kingfish is another fly-angling favorite. In summer, kingfish can be found following the shrimp boat fleet as it moves closer to shore. The large schools of kings roam the beachfront, moving from boat to boat, gorging on the culled by-catch from the anchored fleet. As the schools move about, some inevitably stop around the jetties to feast on the mullet, menhaden, ribbonfish and glass minnows that congregate around the rocks.

When cruising the beach in search of kings, anglers key in on shrimp boats that are culling their catch. The fresh by-catch provides a large chum slick that attracts the fish. With one person on the bow at the ready, fly-anglers idle the boat into the slick slowly from down current, casting into the fresh chum and retrieve the fly quickly.

Fly-fishermen fishing the jetties for kings concentrate their efforts outside of the channel near the end of the rocks, keep-

ing an eye out for heavy concentrations of bait near any drop-offs. The most common area to find schooling fish, especially kings, is the area where the solid rock wall begins the transition to the sandy Gulf bottom. This area usually lies anywhere from 10 to 25 yards from the waterline of the jetties.

Large cobia (ling) also cruise the surface near the jetties, around anchored shrimp boats, or beneath the buoys that mark the channel. Once spotted, the lurking ling is easy to approach – even with the engine running – and it usually takes only one well-placed cast and couple of quick strips to entice it.

Gordon McHaney spotted a nice cobia while fishing near the Port O'Connor jetties. "At first I thought it was a small shark," he said. "I pointed it out to our guide and he identified it as a cobia and pulled out the big rod. Our guide was jacked – it was great."

Birds, though, are often your best fishing guides. "If you can see them, you have to go," Kraimer said. "Your legs start shaking. What is under the birds is too much for most fly-fishermen."

Written by Scott Sommerlatte.

Abel / Reeling in quality products

Since 1978, California-based Abel Quality Products has been supplying the world's fly-fishermen with high-end reels.

The company makes 36 reel models ranging in price from about \$260 to \$1,200. One of the bestsellers is the Super 8 models for 8- and 9-weight lines. At additional cost, customers can add to their reels one-of-a-kind designs and graphic anodized finishes that pay tribute to the sport of fishing.

Although the company also manufactures knives, pliers and other accessories in its 16,000-square-foot Camarillo plant, it is the fly reels that make up the core of Abel's business. Last year, the manufacturer produced between 8,000 and 10,000 reels and generated revenue of \$3 to \$4 million.

To ensure the quality of its reels, the company does not outsource components nor does it price point products.

"We do everything in-house," said Don R. Swanson II, vice president. He emphasizes that they design the products, build the products and then price the products.

"Someone has to make the best (reels)," said Swanson, who just returned from a fly-fishing trip to Chile.

And, that's the company's goal. Fly-fishermen would seem to agree.

According to the International Game Fish Association, Abel reels were used to set 56 fly-fishing world records during 2006 for both fresh and saltwater fish. The organization recognized Abel Quality Products as the leading reel manufacturer of the year for 2006.

"That's a tribute to our products," said Sales Manager Jeff Patterson.

New for 2007, he said, is the Super 5 Narrow fly reel. The S-5N is a 5/6-weight reel with a large arbor and a narrow spool for quick line pick-up.



ABEL QUALITY PRODUCTS' SUPER 5 N REEL. It is new for 2007 and its MSRP is \$550 to \$750, depending on the model.

The company will also offer a limited-edition Brown Trout Super 5 N reel inspired by artist James Prosek. Proceeds from the sale of those reels will benefit Trout Unlimited.

Also new are the Abel Super 12W, a super-wide large arbor reel for Spey rod fly-fishers. Plus, the company has upgraded its Super Series reels size 6 and larger and Big Game reels size 3N and larger with a new double-pawl drag system for added braking. And its anti-/reverse models will now offer oval ventilation holes for increased rigidity and wall strength.

Abel Quality Products sells its reels domestically and internationally. In Texas, it has numerous retail partners. One of its newest is TailWaters Fly Fishing Company, which opened last month in Dallas.

"They carry a great selection of our products," said Swanson.

In addition to buying its reels, the company also hopes its customers will buy into its environmentally friendly philosophy.

Through its catalog, Web site and other venues, Abel encourages anglers to practice catch and release and it also promotes such initiatives as its Gimme 5 project.

Patterson says the project encourages fly-fishermen to give five minutes back to the environment. He suggests picking up trash for just five minutes by that stream you fished in to leave it in better condition.

For more information about Abel Quality Products, visit www.abelreels.com. The Web site also contains complete rules about the company's Tarpon Tournament. Entrants must catch the fish on

an Abel Reel and report it honestly. Enter by July 31 by sending a digital picture of the tarpon, contact information, details of the catch and an estimate of the tarpon's weight. Abel will fly the winner to its California plant where he or she can choose a reel and witness the manufacturing of the reel.

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Urban assault

Fly-fishing opportunities just a short drive away

For the hard-core fly-fishermen looking to save money on travel and spend a little more time on the water honing their skills, urban angling may be the answer.

Whether fishing a pond at a golf course for largemouths or a Hill Country stream running through a city park for bream, there are many opportunities, usually within a short drive of the office, available to the fly-fisherman. So, for those who want to spend a little more time on the water improving casting or angling skills or just want to wind down after a long day in the office, all you have to do is study a city or county map and take the time to go check them out. The key in finding fishable water is that the water is clean and that there is a food-source present for the fish.

"It is not much of a chore to locate a place to fish," said Marcos Enriquez, fishing manager of Orvis Houston, of urban fishing. "In the Hill Country, the key is to find small streams and creeks with moving water. This usually ensures a well-oxygenated environment that can sustain a population of fish."

"Another great place to look at are the small ponds and lakes found in many East Texas towns," Enriquez added. "Many of these were built as a municipal water supply, which usually means the water quality is high and many have healthy populations of bass."

Other great areas to look for fish are the numerous retaining ponds and drainages created in newer Southeast Texas communities to offset the drainage and runoff off the numerous roads and parking lots being built daily. "I never thought about fishing it," said Shane Batchelor of Clute of one such retention pond near his subdivision. "One day my son, Hunter, sent me a text message with a picture of a nice bass he caught. I grabbed my fly rod and was down there beside him not even ten minutes later."

Once a fishy looking area is located, it is time to find an access point. Many of the



urban stream-beds and city ponds will often have a park nearby or some major overpass that will allow access. The only thing needed then is a rod, reel and some flies. A 2-, 3- or 4-weight fly outfit is usually enough as the fish (usually bass and bluegill) tend to be on the smaller side. As for flies, it is hard to beat a small pan-fish popper or a small woolly-bugger. Small dry flies tied to resemble ants and spiders are also a good choice.

There's a bonus when fishing in urban areas, as they are usually the only natural habitat for miles, concentrating the wildlife. For those who enjoy watching birds, squirrels and raccoons, this adds to the experience. For those who have a fear of snakes, it may not.

Urban fly-fishers recommend others watch their step and enjoy a nice hour or two of fishing before catching up with the rat-race.

Written by Scott Sommerlatte.



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Valles Caldera

A majestic haven for feisty brown trout

"I won the lottery," were the first words out of his mouth. Instantly my mind conjured up all sorts of trips, interest-free loans and easy street.

"We get to fish the Valles Caldera," he said and my visions quickly dissipated.

My brother had won the lottery to fish a full day in the Valles Caldera National Preserve, an 89,000-acre Trust in New Mexico created by the Valles Caldera Preservation Act of 2000.

In Spanish, Valles Caldera means "Valleys of the Bowl." Envision a bowl with grassy meadows lining the bottom and pine trees halfway up the mountain face. This part of the Jemez Mountain Range has often been compared to Yellowstone National Park.

After a night camping on a lower section of the San Antonio River outside the preserve, we arrived at the check-in station slightly before the designated time.

When we turned into the Valle Grande, a lone elk cow was silhouetted against the rising sun. Bart, my brother, and I watched as she gracefully bounced over the small ridge before us.

As we crested the ridge, a herd of 50 or 60 elk grazed leisurely. The preserve is estimated to have a herd of near 3,000 elk. But today we would stalk feisty native brown trout.

Bart picked our "beat" (approximately one mile of the river) out of a grab bag, and we were directed up a small ridge to the staging area.

Each lottery winner may bring three companions, and Bart invited friends Eric and Vern. All four of us had fly-fished numerous times and felt comfortable to the task at hand.

After a 45-minute van ride, we arrived at our beat. The preserve furnishes each group one radio for emergencies, weather announcements and pick-up times.

As we crested the ridge, below us was the San Antonio River – clear and cool with lots of brown trout below the runs and in the pools searching for their next meal. We planned for one of us to fish a section of the river – maybe 30- to 40-yards long – and once finished, leapfrog the others, giving us a chance to fish new waters.

The plan seemed sound, but the fish were spooky. The



person at the front of the line usually caught fish, while the others had to work harder to find unsuspecting fish in pools and runs.

The flies of choice were terrestrials, mainly grasshoppers. Bart had tied up a creature of his imagination and convinced me to give it a try. To me, it resembled a large spider or beetle, with a black body, red or orange underbelly, and four appendages with a yellow topside, making it easier to follow on the water.

It didn't take long for "fish on" to sound across our little piece of paradise. Bart had hooked up on a nice 9- to 10-inch brown on his first or second cast. Vern was next. It took me almost an hour before I could ring out the same words.

As I leapfrogged the group, I took a route higher above the stream on a ridge, so as not to spook any fish.

looked down from my vantage point and saw five or six nice browns at the end of a riffle a short distance in front of Eric. After directing him to a small clump of grass just short of the target area, on his first cast a nice fish darted toward the fly and with a load splash inhaled the fly. Eric played the fish, knelt and released it back into the San Antonio unharmed.

We lunched under the pines on the side of one of the Caldera's valleys. In the solitude of the moment, we simply sat and ate in quiet, admiring our surroundings. I contemplated what the pioneers thought of this place. How many Native Americans had camped and hunted this valley? We had fished and caught the offspring of the brown trout they had fished.

Written by Steve Farris.



Karli Illich, left, and Lauren Lewis.

Celebration

Many join in for the special festivities at the Grand Opening party of TailWaters Fly Fishing Co. on May 18.



Flip Pallot and Gray Thornton.



From left, Kathy Leake, Tom Anthony, Melissa Leake and Jean Anthony.



Brent Boone and Bebbie Wright.



Travis and Amy Moore.



Landon Huett, Missy and David Williams.



David Leake, left, Kelli Sellers and Landon Huett.



Cary Marcus, left and Niles Illich.

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Lessons and myths

Flip Pallot casts knowledge of fly finesse

Flip Pallot, the world-renowned fly-fisherman, author and host of the "Walker's Cay Chronicles" television show, was the casting instructor for 10 fortunate fly-fishermen and women in Dallas. In connection with his appearance at the Tailwaters Fly Fishing Co.'s Grand Opening, Pallot spent a morning at White Rock Lake in Dallas with the group, providing individual instruction to each angler.

But it was the advice – and dispelling of many fly-fishing myths – that the participants remembered.

The lesson began with putting the fly rod together. "Start at the tip end, and turn the guides a quarter-turn off of alignment," he said. "Then insert the section and firmly twist it into alignment and do this for each section. The rod will be as strong as if it were one piece, and you won't be able to pull it apart without twisting it off."

Ron Gard of Dallas was one of the pupils and has been fly-fishing exclusively for 25 years. "I didn't do that, but I've started now," he said.

"The 90-foot cast is mostly a myth," Pallot said. "Hitting a target at that distance isn't going to happen very often. Concentrate on accurate casts of less than 50 feet."

Pallot's demonstrations helped prove his points. "I don't know where the phrase 'don't break your wrist' came from," he said, while casting with his arm stationary and only breaking his wrist. "Break it all you want."

A mini-physics course was also taught to the anglers. "The butt of the rod is the fulcrum, and the rod is the lever," he said, after demonstrating accurate casts holding just the line while the rod was on the ground. "Keep the fulcrum



Flip Pallot, right, instructs Charlie Pettigrew on the art of fly-casting. Photo by Craig Nyhus.

near the same spot for accuracy and your top line speed."

Pallot said line speed is equal to the rod tip speed, and wasn't a fan of exaggerated arm movement in the cast. "Exaggerated movement of the arm back and forth during the cast actually slows line speed because it slows the tip," he said.

Pallot pointed out the most common mistakes of fly anglers. "You need to stop the forward cast just past vertical for an instant, then let the rod down slowly to prepare for the backcast. When you do that, the fly will lay down flat ahead of the leader and it won't take three or more strips to move the fly," he said.

The haul is also important, but it's the speed, not the length that makes the difference. "Use short, quick hauls to get the best line speed," he said.

The pupils left the four-hour session impressed. "He put things in a way that breaks everything down very simply,"

said Charlie Pettigrew of Arlington, who has been fly-fishing since he was eight. "He gave me simple but memorable ways to avoid common mistakes. It will wind up sticking with me forever."

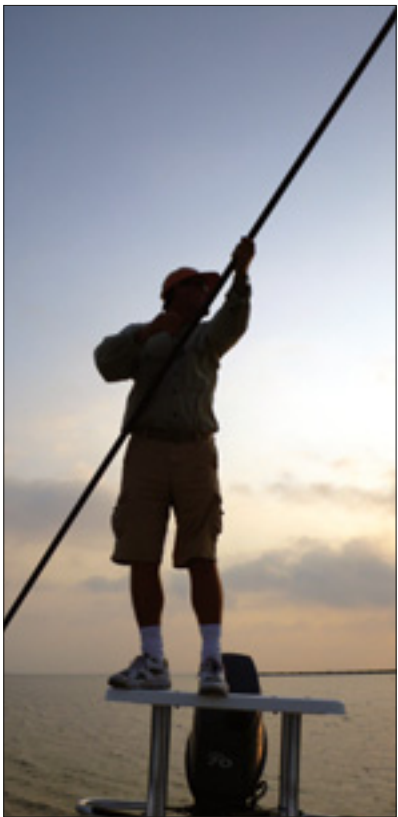
Gard was looking forward to putting the tips to the test while fishing for billfish in Panama in June. "The main thing he helped me with – I have a bad right shoulder and had to teach myself to cast left-handed – but Flip taught me a side wrist-cast without hardly moving my arm to keep me casting right-handed. Of course, then my wrist got tired."

Both pupils recommended a good lesson for any fly-angler, whether novice or experienced. Gard has had several lessons in the past. "A good lesson makes it a whole lot easier," he said. Pettigrew agreed. "It was the best lesson I've had. He's taught enough people – and it works for everyone who's listening."

Written by Craig Nyhus.



Red on the fly



A crab pattern fly is tied to your line. The guide asks you to stand on the front of his skiff. He poles easily and quietly across the flat. The boat slides in the mud.

You watch, wait and hope.

The wind makes small ripples on the water. "There's a red, look left," the guide says quietly. You see a shadow and then a black dot – is that the eye or the tail?

"Moving left," the guide replies to your thoughts.

The cast is perfect, six inches in front of his mouth, and the fish opens and inhales. The fly line cuts the water as the fish bolts away. The hook, line, rod and reel all work together and bring the red to your side.

Written and Photographed by David J. Sams

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