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Flyfisher

Australia, New Zealand & Pacific Basin

ISSUE 9

EARLY SEASON 2010



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CATHY AND BARRY BECK AT OWEN RIVER LODGE

Flyfishing's best known couple report on their latest trip to the north of the South Island.

It's a long way from our cabin in the mountains of Pennsylvania to the doorstep of the Owen River Lodge in New Zealand's South Island. We come here each year to host a group of flyfishers from the USA for Frontiers International, a sporting travel agency.

Our first day starts with breakfast at the lodge. The aroma of fresh coffee and warm bread fills the air. It's an anglers table for sure with a one-sided conversation about the weather and trout fishing. But that's okay, that's why we're here. Our host and lodge owner Felix Borenstein is, as usual, busy being Felix—doing just about everything from serving breakfast to handing out guide assignments. His forecast for the day is fine weather and good water conditions, and of course he mentions the 12 pound brown that was caught last week by one of his guests.

The guides begin to arrive one by one, lunches are loaded up and clients and guides are introduced while plans for the day are made. It's a routine that goes amazingly well and in short order there are vehicles full of anglers and guides headed in every direction. With that taken care of, Felix introduces us to Craig Simpson. Craig will be our guide and we tease Craig about drawing the short straw to get stuck with us.

Craig's Toyota is very well organised with a place for waders, boots and ice cooler. As we head down the road, he tells us that it's a mouse year and the fish have put on extra pounds thanks to all the mouse meals. Craig talks about the many double digit fish that have been caught in the past month. We reflect that back home 'double digit' means inches whereas here, it's pounds.

Our journey takes us to a farmer's house then down to the river. With the first gate behind us we travel through three more until Craig parks the Toyota within sight of the river. We haven't heard the name of the river yet? "Stony Creek," smiles Craig and we understand—enough said! The cow track down to the river is easy to navigate, but once we hit the water we note that God certainly has blessed New Zealand with an abundance of round, slippery river rocks.

Craig, like all Kiwi guides, takes off like a mountain goat while we move at a slower pace. One thing we learned long ago is that guides here will do almost anything to find a trout. From climbing banks, to climbing trees for a better view—you name it, they try it. We rate them the best in the world when it comes to seeing trout.

Craig stops, reminding us of a bird dog on point, and motions us toward him. He says he's spotted a good one and he's happy. (That's the trout that's happy not Craig—he'll be happy if we catch it.) A happy trout is one that's busy feeding.

Ladies first, so Cathy moves into position while Craig crawls to a higher position to watch the trout and direct

Cathy's presentation. Her eighteen foot leader turns over as the bead-head nymph slowly sinks into the trout's view. We all watch the drift and the small yarn indicator attached higher up on the leader. The cast looks perfect, but the trout shows no interest so we change the fly. Next try finds the same results as does the third. Craig declares the fish is still happy, so we try another fly. The next cast pops the fly on the trout's head and it's no longer a happy, neither is our guide as he informs us that the trout is gone. We move on.

We walk and we walk some more. Craig sees a fish but it's stiff and not feeding. Finally our guide goes through his bird dog routine again. He's spotted another trout, and this one is happy. Cathy moves into a casting position.

Every once in a while things just go right. The cast is on the money, the drift bringing the fly right to the trout. There's a cry of 'Upp!' or whatever it is Craig shouts when a trout takes, and the battle begins. Cathy is soon reminded that in New Zealand, the backing is there for more than just filling up your spool. When the 8 pound brown is eventually in the net, we all breathe a sigh of combined delight and relief.

Lunch along a South Island river is always a treat and this one is no exception. We share stories of past trips with Craig. The afternoon moves along and we manage to scare a few more fish. Eventually I land a 5 pounder before we start our walk back to Craig's Toyota.

Our fishing day ends with guide vehicles pulling into the lodge parking area. Felix is there welcoming everyone home and soon anglers and guides stand at the bar, sharing a drink and the day's adventures. For Cathy and I, who are blessed to travel the world hosting fishing trips, there is simply no better place to be.

