



# IT'S ABOUT GETTING ON BOARD.

Stonefly Lodge - The Experience Feb 2011

## WILD BROWN TROUT FISHING

The first thing you notice about John Kerr is his huge moustache. 'A reminder of his Scottish heritage' he tells us as we arrive at his new fishing lodge in New Zealand's South Island. The next thing you notice is his Aussie accent- John and his wife Kate are Australians who started the hugely popular Cape Don fishing lodge in the Northern Territory. 'It took me 15 months to acclimatise to the cold weather down here, but I've never looked back. This is our 20 year dream come true,' he said proudly.

And proud he should be. The lodge is on the Moteuka River in the heart of wild Brown Trout land, and to put it simply, it is sensational. Architecturally designed and engineered, it has been built from natural stone and timber acquired from the property. The total complex is powered by alternative energy sources built on site, and because of this they have won countless eco awards including the coveted New Zealand Regional Environmental Award for "Best use of renewable energy".

But we weren't here for the accommodation or the food, (which was incredible by the way) we had come to try our hand at these fabled Wild Brown Trout of New Zealand- the Mecca for any serious Trout fisherman. The Motueka River has been measured as having the highest counts of Trout per km in New Zealand, and on the first afternoon we hooked into a number of these fish on some of Mayfly nymph patterns. Sight casting these beautiful Brownies is certainly an acquired skill, and although we got the hang of it after a while, if it wasn't for the eagle eyes of our guide Paul, I fear that we wouldn't have had much luck.

Over dinner that night John got our blood pumping as he regaled a story of a 90 year old who caught 5 Brown's over 5 pounds, and one 7 ¾ pound monster in one session at the Kahurangi National Park. The Park, which is only accessible by foot or by helicopter, is full of rivers that have hardly seen a human being, except for a number of actors during the Lord of the Rings shoot.

The next morning after a hearty breakfast, the 7 seater Helicopter picked us up from in front of the lodge, and we made our way over the hills deep into the middle of nowhere. From the air the guides assessed the river conditions and after some discussion we landed next to a wide river with a rocky base and crystal clear water.

It didn't take long to get into the action. Hiding behind tree stumps and flicking a Mayfly nymph into a back eddy, we picked up four fish ranging from 4 to 6.5 pounds within 40 minutes. I knew it was going to be a cracking day. The tricky part about the fishing is that the gin clear water makes the fish spooky.

To minimise this we approached all fish from downstream and made every effort not to make any noise whilst wading. We also used incredibly long leaders ranging from 15 to 18 foot, which tapered down to a 4 pound tippet.

But the advantage of the clear water is that you can see if the fish are sitting up near the surface or down on the riverbed. This helps when choosing the correctly weighted nymph, and using combination of different Mayfly and Stonefly Nymphs we hooked into a bunch of 6 pound plus beauties.

As the day warmed up we switched to some dry flies, and had a lot of luck on Cicada, Blow Fly and Caddis Moth patterns. The biggest fish for the day just tipped the scales at 7 pounds and the smallest was just below 4- and I'm pretty confident that there wouldn't be many rivers in the world that could boast such a high average weight for Trout.

Whilst we didn't beat the 90 year olds record for biggest Trout this time around, we will certainly be back and maybe next time we might hook into one of the 10 pound monsters lurking in the deep.

James Hutchinson

