

• Briefly Noted •

Things to Do . . . Places to Go . . . New Developments

■ What is the latest on fly-fishing great, Lefty Kreh? The long-rod community the world over knows Lefty has been on home hospice care for a while, but he is still very much with us as this is written. We are indebted to longtime *Outdoor Life* fishing editor Jerry Gibbs for passing along the following note, which he received from Marshall Cutchin of *MidCurrent*. *Pax vobiscum*.

Lefty writes: "God and my doctor have given me an extension. Some weeks ago I was put in home hospice care with three medical problems and it was assumed I'd be here a short time. Word about it went on the internet and my computer and iPhone were flooded with wonderful and humbling messages. I read every one but regretfully wasn't able to reply to most. My granddaughter used Facebook to handle messages. My doctor and best friend experimented with medicines and said, 'I'm going to try to keep you around.' So far it's working. I'm confined to my home, hooked to oxygen, and have little stamina. My daughter and son are taking constant care of me, and no father was more blessed. Several computer projects keep me busy. There have been ups and downs with some additional surgery, which is slowly getting better. There is no guarantee on how long I'll be here, but I am so humbled and grateful for all your wonderful messages.

All The Best, Lefty."

•••••

■ *Editor Note: Many of our subscribers are likely familiar with Gray's Sporting Journal and its reputation as one of the most authentic voices of fine sporting literature. Miles Nolte has long been the columnist and wayfaring raconteur of its highly entertaining Angling column. Aside from his notable prose and literary skills, Miles is a consummate angler and a former Alaskan fly-fishing guide.*

When he is not busy spinning yarns about his fly-fishing travels, he's busy living them. Miles is currently enjoying a long hiatus in New Zealand, and he has sent us a quick and enjoyable report about his experiences on the North Island, where he and his travel partner have enjoyed great success amid an intimidating number of options and rivers for their DIY fly-fishing adventure. He writes:

New Zealand's North Island shudders with cold, clear, fresh water. Anglers like myself who have read the magazines and scanned the websites are familiar with the more



famous wet lines like the Tongariro and other Taupo tributaries. But the sheer quantity of trout rivers and creeks can feel overwhelming to a visiting angler.

My time here has helped me empathize with the many fly-fishing tourists I meet in my home state each season. Montana also abounds with fertile rivers and creeks. They fall from nearly every mountain in a state that takes its name from the Spanish word for mountain. But in Montana I know where to go, and if I don't know where to go, I know whom to ask. Not so in New Zealand. And while Kiwis are, in my limited experience, friendly and forthcoming (more on that later), it's difficult to even know where to begin. Most of us travel on limited time. Time here can feel exceptionally limited, because traveling this spectacular island nation without exploring it beyond the realms of fish would be shameful. While every fishing trip to a new destination should include at least one gamble—hopefully exploring a

blue line on a map that may or may not hold fish—few of us are willing to risk all our valuable angling days that way.

Below are a few resources that were instrumental in planning and facilitating my time on the North Island.

If you're looking for a local agent to design a vacation to your liking, The Best of New Zealand specializes in doing just that (www.bestofnzflyfishing.com). Their knowledge and contacts extend well beyond the North Island, and they facilitate far more than just fly fishing travel, but that's how I used their services. Because I wanted to experience the famous Turangi region at the south end of Lake Taupo, they booked me at the Tongariro River Lodge, where my wife and I enjoyed exceptional dining and accommodation to compliment the outstanding fishing. For more on the fishing we had with the lodge guide staff, check out my previous post at <https://www.grayssportingjournal.com/dispatch-north-island-new-zealand/>

As just about every article about fishing New Zealand will tell you, it's worth your time and money to book at least a couple days with a guide, even if you're planning to do the majority of your fishing without one (as we were). I've guided trout anglers for much of my adult life and caught them all over the U.S. and the world, yet my time with the Tongariro River Lodge's head guide, Tim McCarthy, proved to be immensely helpful in learning some of the nuances of North Island fisheries. Plus, he helped my wife catch her largest trout to date, bigger than any I've ever been able to guide her into. Additionally, splurging for a few nights of top-notch accommodation can be well worth the money, even on a budgeted vacation. Amy and I spent most of our travel nights sleeping at friends'

THE ANGLING REPORT

houses, in mid-priced airbnbs, or “freedom camping,” so our nights at the lodge refreshed and rejuvenated us with a bit of comfort, luxury, and solitude. Of course, if you’re able to spend the majority of your time in a lodge setting, do so, but I think everyone who fishes in New Zealand should spend at least one night in a tent beside a river. Preferably several.

After leaving the Tongariro River Lodge, Amy and I hung around Turangi for a few more days, enjoying the quaint town and spending more time on the storied river. One afternoon while I was working a run with nymphs and an indicator, killing time before the evening rise, a stranger walked up to me and struck up a conversation. I started out skeptical. While fly anglers in the States are usually cordial, we don’t walk up to complete strangers in the midst of a drift and begin discussions. My suspicion demonstrates my lack of understanding in regard to New Zealand’s cultural context. The stranger, Doug Sevens, didn’t

want anything from me other than a conversation. Kiwis tend to be friendlier than Yanks.

Doug’s a local resident, and expert on the fisheries of the North Island. Within ten minutes of meeting me, Doug had given me advice on effective flies, informed me of a specific regulation on the Tongariro that prohibits the type of strike indicator I was using (yarn only on the Tongariro; now you know), invited me to his home, and offered to take me fishing. For the record, Doug had no idea that I make my living as an outdoor writer. Unfortunately, our differing schedules prevented us from getting out on the water together, but I did visit his house (where he gifted me a package of legal indicators). Doug runs a website called nzfishing.com (<http://nzfishing.com>) dedicated to helping anglers find and access excellent water all over the country. He asked about Amy’s and my upcoming travel plans and suggested rivers where we could stop and fish along the way.

Being that I am still an American and a fishing guide, my personal code of ethics prevents me from telling you exactly which rivers we fished, but I can tell you that Doug’s website provides maps and details on each of them, along with dozens of others. Even the “small fish” rivers he suggested held fat rainbows of 16–20 inches in nearly every likely looking pool. Outside the famed radius of Taupo, we never saw another angler.

The highlight of my time on the North Island came beside a wide pool on another unnamed river just a few hours’ drive from the Tongariro River Lodge. Tim, the guide we fished with, suggested that spot when I asked him about camping opportunities in the area with fishing possibilities. The short dusk window showed a handful of dimpling rises. I didn’t land them all, but I’ll not soon forget the rainbow that broke my leader with his initial headshake and proceeded to leap steadily and consistently down the pool, shattering the reflected sunset.

• OUTFITTER CRITIQUES •

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Fishing Trip Report Forms. Our policy on these forms is to publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received without censorship. Agents, guides, lodge operators, and/or outfitters who disagree with anything said about them in this section are free to submit a rebuttal. As a subscriber, you can help extend the reach of this program by filing a Fishing Trip Report Form yourself. You should find one inside this issue of your newsletter. Alternately, you can file a report online by going to our website, www.anglingreport.com, and clicking on “File a Report.”

■ Subscriber Guy Gardiner recently sent us a report regarding a trip he took to Christmas Island in September 2017. In his report, Gardiner describes a successful, yet uneven, experience at Christmas Island’s newest outfitter, Ikari House, where there was an instance of thievery and dissatisfaction with a particular day of guiding, but more on that later.

Gardiner reported that there were abundant numbers of small to medium-sized bonefish, with the odd big one mixed in. He also said there were healthy populations of

triggerfish and trevally, and there were even chances to fish for the newly popularized milkfish. “We had two mornings offshore for oceanic milkfish, with seven takes, two hookups, and one big one brought to the side of the boat.”

Aside from milkfish, there were also opportunities for offshore fishing for yellowfin tuna, and Gardiner was able to boat over 10 tuna in one half-day outing. He also said that another highlight of the trip was catching three triggerfish in one outing to the flats, in between fishing for bonefish.

In terms of the weather

experienced on his trip, he said, “The weather was great, though cold and windy for Christmas Island.” He said the average high was 27°C (80°F) but with a biting wind of around 17 knots throughout the day. However, this did not seem to affect the fishing very much, and the guides worked to position him for success, despite the windy conditions.

The problems encountered on Gardiner’s trip were both isolated events, but they did manage to dampen the mood and the overall experience. First, there was an incidence of theft. Gardiner states,