

WindKnots

A Monthly Publication of the Texas Flyfishers

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March 2006

Ascension Bay, March 2006

By Fred Tooley

Ever been to a "destination wedding"? Well, until recently, neither had I. A friend's daughter was getting married in Playa Del Carmen and my wife decided we were attending. Although not the toughest duty imaginable, a wedding is still a wedding and they are definitely designed for the female of the species! To properly reward myself for being the cooperative husband, I booked a guided fly fishing trip to the Pesca Maya Lodge through Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures, an outfitter located in Bozeman, Montana (both the lodge and the outfitter have their own websites). I know, it sounds a little strange to book a trip to Mexico using an outfitter in Montana, but it worked!

I was picked up at my hotel (located about an hour south of Cancun) by a driver in a late model, air conditioned Suburban at 6:00 AM. The driver made stops at a couple of other hotels in the area and, before you knew it, we had a full load of five fishermen and one fisherwoman. The trip south to Tulum was uneventful, but from there he turned off the main highway. For the next hour-and-a-half we drove at 10-15 miles per hour on one of the worst excuses for a road that I have ever seen. Rumor has it that the road was not too bad until hurricane Wilma washed over it a few months ago.



We arrived at the lodge with compressed spines and were treated to a quick breakfast. The lodge typically caters to fishermen that are staying for several days, but the driver explained that the "day trips" were something they had just started within the past year. Since the one Suburban trip that morning delivered about \$2,500-\$3,000 worth of day-trip fees, my guess is that it is working well for them.

They will furnish all equipment (except for flies, which are extra) as part of the deal, but purist that I am, I brought my own gear. I was introduced to my guide who promptly began assembling the four rods and reels that I brought, and then studied my collection of flies to be certain that I had something he could work with. If I had none of the patterns he was looking for, the lodge had plenty for sale. Accompanying my guide was a young apprentice who assisted in putting the equipment together (I'm not sure which one of them missed a guide on my seven weight, but it showed up pretty quickly after a couple of casts).

We launched the boat and did not have far to go before we were fishing. The young assistant did all of the poling and the experienced guide stood alongside me for the entire day, pointing-out fish and helping keep my line out from under my big feet. I am used to fishing "off the clock face" while being coached from a guide poling at the stern, and so for me, this "personal assistant" by my side was a far superior system. All I had to do was throw where he pointed. *(Continued on page 3.)*

President's Corner

by Jerry "Buggywhip" Loring, President of the Texas Flyfishers

Communication is a key focus for TFF in 2006. Over the years, there have been many requests for a web page stocked with useful information on upcoming events, committee projects, and officers. Now is the time to move forward with this project. Therefore, during the 2006 calendar year, TFF will add several new pages to the website. These new pages will provide information on upcoming events and programs and will be sponsored by the people most involved with them, that is, the committee chairs and officers. The purpose is to provide a means by which members may stay informed of events that interest them most.

Accordingly, each officer and committee head has been asked to create their own web page. With the help of our web master, Dave Kelly, the web pages will be updated on a continual basis.

This will likely result in some degree of redundancy because the same information and topics will be available at the meetings and in the Wind Knots. However, those two items occur on a monthly basis. Hopefully, the new web pages will be updated as-needed and will fill-in the blanks and provide the very latest scoop.

Importantly, these web pages will have comprehensive information about the activity and committee head or officer in charge. This will include preferred methods of contact, photographs, general information, history of the event, and an action plan for those who wish to participate. The goal is to provide clear information about club events in a timely manner.

For now, the most important new webpage is the auction. Rick Rawls, Dave Kelly, and I are trying to get this page up and running as fast as possible. The auction is Saturday, April 1, and we ask for your support and participation. It's always a fun time and there are plenty of bargains to be found. I hope to see you there.

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The Chuck Scates Benefit – Moon Dog Café, Rockport

By Jerry Loring

As many of you know, Captain Chuck Scates was off the water for over a year because of his battle with throat cancer. To help defray lost income and medical expenses, several of his many friends recently held a benefit fishing tournament in Rockport. The event was a great success and was well attended and supported. One of many key players was Captain Mike Cook, a guide and close personal friend of Chuck's.

Part of the success was the organizational plan itself. For starters, Maverick Boats, Inc. donated a seventeen foot, fully outfitted boat, motor, and trailer, which was raffled off at \$100 per ticket, and only four hundred tickets were available. The tournament entry fee was four hundred per team. Additionally, in the evening after drinks and Bar-B-Q at the Moon Dog Cafe, there was an auction. The benefit greatly helped Chuck's financial recovery.

Captain Chuck Scates is definitely worth the support of all fly fishers on the Texas coast. He is a true pioneer of our sport and was the first to have a business card with the words "fly fishing" on it. Chuck has designed original fly patterns, authored a book, and developed several fishing techniques, all relating directly to the Texas coast. He is a true friend and we wish him well.

Corey Rich and I were fishing partners in the benefit and started the festivities at a Captain's party the night before the tournament. We visited Barry Hill at his newly build "getaway" for hamburgers. In the main event the next day, we were fortunate enough to be guided by Captain Billy Trimble. Despite a thirty mile per hour gale, Captain Trimble found fish for us to cast to in the East Flats. After a day's fishing, we gathered again at the Moon Dog Café to start the auction.

From Beaumont to Brownsville, the reputation of TFF's Corey Rich is growing. Somehow, during the course of things, he was asked to preside over and call the live auction. He accepted, of course, and performed up to his high standards. He ought to



turn pro. As promised, the Texas Fly Fishers supported the event with money raised in the 2005 Redfish Rodeo. It was a terrific evening and a worthwhile event.

Thank you Chuck, for all you have done for fly fishing on the Texas Coast. It was great to see you and Lynn again. Here's to another twenty years of guiding.

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(Ascension Bay, continued from page 1.)

The equipment set-up was also a little different than I am used to seeing. The Mexicans use a boat called a "Panga" for their shallow water poling. It can go pretty shallow, but not quite as shallow as a typical Hell's Bay boat. The pole was not a fiberglass or graphite Stiffy, but rather a pretty straight and use-worn sapling trunk. The sapling did not need to be as long as the average Stiffy pole, as there was no poling platform. The young assistant, however, did an excellent job poling and never once did I hear the water swish off the pole or the pole thud against the side of the boat. In fact, he was completely quiet even when I snagged his shirtsleeve with the fly. Luckily, there was no blood drawn. He soon learned to angle the boat to stay out of harm's way and there were no further snags or even near-misses throughout the day.

The wind was fairly intimidating at times during the eight hour fishing day. When we were in a protected area, I fished with my trusty seven weight, but sometimes switched to my "wind friend," a nine weight by Thomas & Thomas. Ascension Bay bonefish are typically not large enough to require anything more than a seven or eight weight rod, but the wind can certainly demand more. I was very lucky for my day trip because the wind on the following days was ripping and, in my estimation, not fishable using flies.

My largest bone ran about three-and-a-half pounds, but they are all exciting to catch, no matter what their size. When people ask me if they put up a fight, my reply is that it is a little like hooking a car bumper on the freeway. They don't jump or dig in, they just keep going, and going, and going.

We had a ten weight rigged with a crab for permit, but I never saw one. The guide claimed he saw one and couldn't understand why I couldn't see it when he was pointing right at it. Spotting fish that are not breaking the surface takes a special talent and a lot of experience. I don't have enough of either. These fish require some pretty pinpoint accuracy for casting and no matter how hard the guide points, if you can't spot the fish, it is going to be difficult to place the fly where it needs to go. My accuracy improved during the day. I managed to hit one bone right on the head with my fly (certainly not the way to do it, but impressive nonetheless).

During the hunt for bonefish, I inadvertently caught a barracuda and a small jack. You never know what is going to come out of the shadows to grab the fly. We fished most of the day off the boat, with water depth varying from 18 inches to about four feet. The water in this area is beautiful, but I was somewhat surprised to find that it was not as crystal clear in some areas as I would have expected. Whether this was due to the wind or just the average clarity for the area is unknown to me (I have fished water in Florida that was actually much more clear).

When it got super shallow, around six inches or so, I put on my wading booties and we slipped over the side to walk the flats. The guide was barefoot both on the boat and while wading. Myself, I am a tenderfoot. I enjoyed the wading as a change of pace, but I like being able to cover more water in the boat. To be productive while wading, you need a lot of fish, and there did not seem to be as many fish schooling as the guide would normally see. I was mostly throwing at lone cruisers that could be spotted in the shallows pushing a hump of water much like a Texas redfish.

During the last hour of the day the weather turned bad in a hurry and we returned to the dock. After breaking down and tubing rods, I tipped the guide and his assistant and the six fisherpersons piled back into the Suburban for the ride back to town on the road from hell. I was dropped off at my hotel at about 8:00 PM, just in time for dinner and grinning from ear to ear.

If you are heading to the Yucatan then I highly recommend this trip. I worked with Bob Meade of Yellow Dog and he was very responsive and helpful in his communications. I certainly will be going back again, maybe to stay a few days at the lodge next time.

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How To Buy a Boat

By Jerry Loring

How often have you heard someone say, "The two happiest days of a boat owner's life are the day the boat is bought and the day the boat is sold"? Or how about the adage, "a boat is a hole in the water into which you pour your money." My personal favorite is, "Remember, a floating boat is in a temporary state."

In a past life I steamed with the United States Navy across four oceans, five seas, and I don't recall how many gulfs and straits. I never once worried about the seaworthiness of our destroyer, the USS Lofberg, DD-517. Worry was not part of the equation, especially after taking 20 degree-plus sideways rolls for twelve hours in a typhoon in the South China Sea, fighting two onboard ship fires, and witnessing the forward third of our two hundred-and-thirty foot Lofberg completely submerge in the water up to the bridge when it thundered into a massive wave.

The USS Lofberg was not mine as it was a commissioned ship of the US Navy. However, I owned a boat at the time (it was stored behind my dad's garage while I was at sea) and have owned at least one boat ever since. Some boats are inexpensive, while some cost plenty. Not being born with a silver spoon in my mouth or with the ability to collect several thousand silver spoons at a whim, I had to be resourceful with my boat purchases.

The first boating venture was a used motor. A rented johnboat from whichever marina would do the trick. Then someone gave me a johnboat. It floated but you needed a bailing bucket. One day I had saved enough money from my commission checks to cash-out on a used bass boat. Later, there was actually a boat note for a new nineteen foot Mako center console. What a horse that boat was. If I hadn't started shallow water fishing (fly fishing came later) that Mako might still be in my possession. However the urge of shallow grass flats and redfish prompted the purchase of my ShallowSport back in 1985. And yes, I still own it.

A newer, modern boat is certainly appealing. These new generation boats are lighter, stronger, pole with ease, launch quickly, and handle like a dream. Makes one want a boat, right? The question then is how to choose one and how to buy it.

First, there is no perfect boat. Decide which type of fishing (or pleasure boating) you prefer and settle that issue from the start. Do you fish saltwater, freshwater, ski, jetty, offshore, bay, bass, or shallow? One boat may do one or two of these things well, but no boat can do them all.

Second, shop around. If your pocket is full, purchase one at the Houston boat show some January. The competition is keen and the deals are real. And a word of advice: if it's your first boat note, make sure that you buy insurance.

If you cannot afford a boat note, do what I did and buy the motor first. A new one is preferred unless you are a very serious marine mechanic or have one in the family. This strategy has worked twice for me. I saved and saved and purchased a new motor suitable for the type of boat that I wanted. The first time was at a going-out-of-business sale and the second at a change-of-model clearance. Of course I was asked, "Did you buy a boat?" No dear, I bought a boat motor. For some reason, that seemed OK with her.

You see, once you have the motor, it is easy to find a suitable boat. Keep saving dollars and shopping and calling around and sooner or later some marina or dealer or friend will have the right boat at the right price. A showroom boat, a boat with a blown motor, excess inventory at a manufacturer, who knows where the boat will come from, but it will happen. The trailer part is easy, just call up a manufacturer and they will make it on request.

A couple of times, friends of mine have gone in partnership on boats and it has worked out for them. Be sure you know your partner well and be sure to get insurance. Leasing boats is now common and you can always rent them. There are many options. I recommend fishing with friends who have boats until you find out which type of fishing or boating you prefer. Then jump right in.

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Across the Lydia Anne

By Ralph Adams

Port Aransas. The first half of April. I occupied my time in the kayak, fishing alone except for the intermittent storms and thunder clouds. Weather-makers came and went over the island. The weather seemed constantly on the brink and ready to crack for good, but it held for the first six or seven days of our stay. Despite the changeable conditions, the redfish were extravagant. Each day found them rioting in that curious habit we call tailing.

The bottom finally fell out as a late-season front swept southwards across Texas. Its passage was marked by high winds that shook the stilt house we were staying in and felled temperatures by a third. I went through the motions and actually made it to the launch site before calling it a day.

On the way back to the house, I stopped at a convenience store. An odd-job cowboy with sun-bleached hair and a roofer's tan stood at the head of the line counting coins from a cupped hand flecked with paint. He wore ropers so flat and round with wear that they looked like pancakes. To the consternation of the clerk and those behind him on line, he was making a meticulous show of a five dollar purchase in pennies and dimes.

He spoke in the loud voice of someone accustomed to working outdoors and said, "I may be poor, but then again, I may be rich!" The clerk simply leered at him.

The ferry crossing over the Lydia Anne Channel was among the pleasantries of that week. My routine was to shuttle over before dawn and make the return trip anytime between late morning and early afternoon. Even the shortest ferry rides have a way of promoting cheer in those riding them. I associate them with adventure and excitement. The sea and the breeze, the calling gulls and the massive engines, the waft of salt and marine diesel together with the good fortune of heading to an island or remote province, if not in fact, then certainly in the imagination.

Of course, try telling this to travelers making the crossing at the peak of the high season. Summer ferries out of locations in Massachusetts inspire fantastic accounts of savagery among the more-or-less highly educated and affluent ridership. Boston consultants, fund managers, and university academics jockey for limited space to get their automobiles on the six o'clock ferry. Boarding can be rough and each year, more than a few fist fights break out on the way to a weekend's relaxation.

The wait for the Port Aransas ferry can easily be an hour depending on when you go. On final approach, attendants arrange vehicles into any one of the dozen slots near the actual landing. It's a happy bit of progress when they finally point at you and you turn on the ignition for the tenth time in two hours, and put the car in gear and roll down to the ferry ramp clanking over the steel rampart as they usher you onto the boat.

Once on board, car engines are shut off and doors fly open. Who can resist getting out to see the view? I find myself leading the pack of weekenders to the front of the boat to see who can spot the first dolphin. Seagulls float at fixed points above the deck looking for hand-outs. The tide glides through the channel causing the ferries cross in a long, sweeping curve like an orbit.

Hard-core sea trout anglers make the passage. They drive massive pick-up trucks and tow the pride of the Gulf Coast fleet. They are so far out on the evolutionary ladder of sport fishing that they care not for your prized redfish or racking big numbers of good trout at secret locations. Their mission is steeped in the tradition of Texas plugging. They are relentless dreamers obsessed with thirty inch trout. They call in sick to work in February because the windows of opportunity are few and narrow and the drive to South Texas is epic.

The truck parked in front of me has a sticker that says, "Fear No Fish," which, if you think about it, is an amazingly silly statement. It has none of the quizzical humor or panache of what the cowboy said in the convenience store. If I had any presence of mind, I would have seized the opportunity to politely inquire with the owner on what "Fear No Fish" actually means. Of the top inshore gamefish in Texas, redfish aren't scary. They have rounded and almost friendly features. Your typical speckled trout has big teeth, but jutting at angles from his gaping mouth they can make him look absurdly ghoulish.



It would certainly make sense if they were shark hunters. Friends of mine were charged by a bull shark that surprised them inside the second bar in plain daylight on Padre Island. An exceptional angler I know recounts tales of nighttime fishing at Boca Chica Beach. After drawing courage in a few beers, they dragged huge baits out to the third bar. If you've ever waded into the moving surf at night, you know that daylight's third bar feels something like the thirtieth bar in the dark. On the way out, he tells of sensing a presence nearby in the water, followed by a rush to one side or directly away from him. He was crossing paths with sharks. Interestingly, neither of these friends have that sticker on their vehicles.

The ferry landing is a good place to spot migrations of retired auto workers from Michigan. They sometimes travel alone as hermits on the move, but most often they travel with their wives. You'll recognize them for their smaller, late-model RVs and fourteen foot aluminum runabouts painted silver or green. They use spinning gear and bait and everything they own is old and nothing shiny. They are the antithesis of the trout master, but not necessarily in terms of skill at catching gamefish.

And then there are the young people. They make the crossing for a lot of reasons, but fishing is not one of them. They come out late on sunny afternoons in the high season, when the light is at its best. They appear as visions of blond hair and honey brown shoulders. They laugh and smile and wear river hats and sit in pairs in the back of open-air Jeeps and make you wonder. Their escorts are tall, skinny boys with haircuts like the Beatles who listen to Limp Bizkit on the radio.

Several years ago in May, I took my brother-in-law fishing in Port Aransas. It was one of those rare times when you take someone fly fishing who has never fly fished and you both catch a lot of fish. A school of speckled trout was crowded into a cut and we caught them for a few hours before leaving them to try for redfish.

The highlight was the fish that we didn't land. It struck at the end of a cast out into the main body of the shrimp boat channel. The strike was probably more subtle than the ones we were getting from the trout, but the difference was evident right away. The fish accelerated somewhat yet it didn't seem badly panicked. It simply swam and pulled all of the slack fly line. The trout had all been easily managed by stripping them back by hand. This time, the fly line zipped through the guides followed by the Bimini, which clicked out the tip top. There was little to do in that moment except hold on and wonder what might be on the end of the line using the current to magnify its heft and my imagination.

The bright green backing ran off the reel in a steady run and began thinning on the arbor. The depths of that five year old backing had never been off the reel since the day it was loaded. Dozens of trips in the kayak had deeply embedded salts into the line and it actually began to bind on itself. A snag brought the encounter to an end as the tip bowed at the final moment and let go as the tippet parted and the mystery fish swam away in the direction of the ferry landing.

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WIND KNOTS CLASSIFIEDS

Space permitting, we'll run "Wanted" and "For Sale" ads for members of Texas Flyfishers. On a case-by-case basis, we may also run ads from non-members if the goods or services sought or offered would be of interest to our members. Send your ad by e-mail to ralphchristineadams@earthlink.net or regular mail to Ralph Adams, 4019 Levonshire, Houston, TX 77025. If you like, please include a photograph of items to be sold.

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2006 OUTINGS SCHEDULE

Our outings schedule is a work-in-progress. Here are the trips we have currently scheduled for 2006. Sometimes dates and places change, so check here regularly. **Blue font indicates a change has been made since the last issue of *Wind Knots*.**

To volunteer as a trip leader, contact fresh water outings chairman Clarke Thornton or salt water outings chairman Scott Fossum. Their telephone numbers and email addresses are on the Executive Committee listing later in this issue. Fresh water trips are designated [F], salt water [S] in the listings below.

[F] April 9 – Bellville, TX – Loring's Secret Bass Lake, bass and panfish, led by Jerry Loring.

[S] April 22 – Aransas Pass, TX – Lighthouse Lakes, led by Ralph Adams.
Kayak trip in Lighthouse lakes. Kayak rental available nearby.

[S] April 29 – Aransas Pass, TX – Brown & Root Flats, leader needed.
Catch lots of redfish and speckled trout using a kayak. Good catching opportunities are a short paddle from the start or go for a 10 mile marathon paddle. Kayak rental and delivery are available nearby.

[F] April 29 – Damon, TX – The Sunfish Spectacular, panfish and bass, led by Clarke Thornton.

[S] May – West Galveston Bay – Greens Lake, led by Scott Fossum.
This is a kayak trip. We will ferry the boats eight miles to/from Greens Lake by motor boat.

[F] May 20-21 – Nueces River, Camp Wood, TX – Bud Priddy Memorial One Fly, led by Clarke Thornton.

[S] June – Rockport, TX – kayak trip, led by Aaron Hammer.

[F] June 10-11 – Llano River, Junction, TX – bass and panfish, led by Clarke Thornton.

[S] July 22 – "Port O'Connor One Fly Tournament."
Rotating crystal trophy up for grabs. Greatest total inches of fish caught on 1st fly tied on wins. No entry fee & you get a free meal (what a deal). Boat, boat ride or kayak required. Scott Fossum leader (contact information on Executive Committee listing).

[S] August – Redfish Rodeo.

[F] August 12 – San Marcos, TX – bass and panfish, led by Clarke Thornton.

[F] September 16-17 – Frio River – bass and panfish, led by Clarke Thornton.

[S] September 23-24 – "Padre Island Surf Fest." Fish Padre Island National Seashore guided by Capt. Billy Sandifer for speckled trout, ladyfish, tarpon, and jack crevalle. Optional camping on beach. Estimated cost of \$125 for one day of guided fishing, the second day is on your own. \$50 non-refundable deposit required to reserve space, led by Ralph Adams.

[S] October – South Padre Island, leader needed.

[F] October 28 – Damon, TX, the Seven Lakes at Damon – bass and panfish, led by Clarke Thornton.

[S] November – Location TBD – led by Aaron Hammer.

[F] November 18 – Guadalupe River, Sattler, TX – rainbow trout, led by Clarke Thornton.

December – No outings.

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About Wind Knots

Wind Knots is your monthly newsletter, and it needs your help – otherwise we'll run out of things to print. E-mail your articles, photos, artwork, graphics, fishing news, tall tales, lies, and letters to the editor to adamsfamilytx@sbcglobal.net not later than the 10th of the month for that month's issue. **Be sure to put the words *Wind Knots* in the subject line of your e-mail.** If you don't, I might think it's spam or worse and delete it before opening.

If you have digital photos, please send them via e-mail in .JPG format. If you have paper photos, mail them to Corey Rich, 2900 Wesleyan, Suite 545, Houston, TX 77027. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return.

The preferred form for text – stories, letters, and so forth – is in Microsoft Word. Please try to keep your offerings in the 800 to 1,000 word range, or less. If you send photos along with an article, proposed captions are appreciated.

Wind Knots is posted on the club's Web site as soon as it becomes available. Check www.texasflyfishers.org regularly for the latest newsletter and other news of interest.

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Texas Flyfishers
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Texas Flyfishers Membership Application

Please check one: New Application Renewal

To join Texas Flyfishers or renew your membership, please complete this form and mail it with your check to the address below, or bring it with you to one of our monthly meetings. All memberships expire June 30th of each year, and renewals are due July 1st. New members, please pro-rate your payment for the number of months between now and the end of June, inclusive. Our monthly meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month (except December), beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Dues are for (check one): Individual at \$24 a year Family at \$32 a year Student at \$16 a year

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Work phone: _____

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