

SPOORNET/FOSAF TROUT EXPO A GREAT SUCCESS

by Ed Herbst

Despite one of the worst droughts in years which turned the rivers of Barkly East into shallow, slow-flowing shadows of their usual selves, the SpoorNet Fosaf Trout Expo held in the town in mid-April was greatly enjoyed by all who attended it and two fish in excess of two kilograms were caught.

In the past the annual Trout Expo was staged by the Stutterheim Angling Club at Gubu dam and this year it was to have been staged by another active and well-established club in the Federation of Southern African Flyfishers Eastern Cape Chapter, Queenstown Flyfishing Club. However Queenstown sportingly stepped down to allow the Expo to be staged by the newly-constituted Barkly Wild Trout Association, a move designed to give the Association the publicity which I am sure flyfishermen and-women across the country will agree it deserves.

The association was formed at the behest of Martin Davies, a research scientist in the Department of Ichthyology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown.

Martin, a Welshman who came to South Africa seventeen years ago, has achieved almost legendary status among flyfishermen in the Eastern Cape as the man who has virtually single-handedly resurrected trout fishing in the area. When the Pirie hatchery closed down in 1982 it seemed to signal the end of an era but Martin helped to set up a series of small "satellite" hatcheries near Plettenberg Bay (1987), Cathcart (1988) and, in 1989, at Hogsback, Molteno and Barkly East. From the start Martin advocated the rather radical policy of stocking fry rather than fingerlings because they are easier to transport, cost less and have a far less impact on the aquatic environments into which they are introduced.

As a result of his enthusiasm, drive and expertise there is now far more fishing available in the Eastern Cape than there ever was before and, needless to say, Martin has played a major role in getting the Barkly Wild Trout Association established.

So far the Association has eleven members who control about a hundred kilometres of river. This fishing is available at a rate of twenty rand a day to members of the Federation of Southern African flyfishers (FOSAF), the central body to which most South African flyfishing clubs belong, and thirty rand a day to non-members. When one considers that you can be charged up to five hundred rand a day to fish half a kilometre of one bank of a top British trout stream such as the Test or Itchen which contains stocked not wild trout that weigh about the same as Barkly Trout, the value-for-money fishing being made available by the Barkly Wild Trout Association is obvious.

Fishing is available on the Sterkspruit, Bokspruit, Joggem Spruit, Vlooiakraal Spruit, the Kraai River and the Willow Stream and details can be obtained from Barry Kalish at the Drakensberg Hotel, Barkly East, telephone (04542) 277 or write to PO Box 60, Barkly East 5580. Barry is in constant contact with the Association members and is thus well able to advise anglers which catchment areas are unaffected by rain or which rivers are fishing well at any given time.

Martin's ideals, while taking cognizance of the rationale behind private, syndicated waters, are proletarian and his wish is to make as much good trout water as possible available to the public.

The Barkly Wild Trout Association is unusual in concept in that it enables the riparian owners in the Barkly district to develop, improve and make available for public usage their streams, rivers and dams, while retaining autonomous control of their property.

The Barkly Wild Trout Association is thus the first organisation of its kind in South Africa where riparian owners have come together to help each other develop a natural resource for the benefit of the Barkly East community at large and the flyfishing public in general.

The Expo was opened by the Chairman of the President's Council, Dr Willie van Niekerk. In his speech Dr van Niekerk said that the principles upon which the Association is founded are sound and to be welcomed precisely because they counter the threat of syndication which, in some areas, has made flyfishing for trout a sport to which only the affluent have access. He said that contrary to normal syndication practice where the farmer cedes control of his water to the syndicate, the association's constitution leaves that control firmly vested in the farmer.

Dr van Niekerk noted that the Association's members control only one hundred kilometres of the estimated thousand kilometres of river flyfishing available in the Barkly district and called on other



Brian Rhodes of Port Elizabeth (left) and Tony Kietzman of Johannesburg pose with their large fish outside the Drakensberg Hotel.

farmers to join the Association.

"If anglers can gain access to the rest of the water in this district it will significantly boost the tourism prospects of the region. Tourism is the one industry which has the potential to exceed the gold mines as a source of foreign exchange and the platteland desperately needs the revenue which tourism can provide," he said.

"We read and hear a great deal about the problem which are resulting from rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation but the root cause of this flow of people to the cities is rural depopulation. We need to provide the jobs which will make it viable for people to remain in the country and, properly marketed, tourism can play a significant role in this regard.

"If we can attract flyfishermen to this area in significant numbers the ripple effect will be felt throughout the local economy. Such anglers stay at local hotels, fill up their vehicles at local garages and buy a wide range of consumer goods from soft drinks to newspapers and periodicals," he said.

Fishing was provided on the Karmmelk, Kraai, Sterk, Bok, Joggem and Langkloof Rivers and the picturesque, willow-cloistered Willow Stream.

To someone accustomed to the gaunt, stark beauty of the Cape's mountain streams, the gentle, pastoral beauty of the rivers in Barkly came as a pleasant surprise. To those who fish the rivers of the Eastern Transvaal however, there was much to make them feel at home. The Joggem, for example, is a typical Eastern Transvaal-type river with classic riffles and runs. It has long stretches of deep and slow water, alternating with faster, shallower water which demand a versatile approach and test one's rivercraft to the maximum.

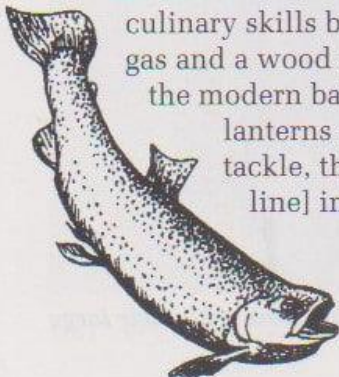
The Langkloof, is a shallow meandering river but its deep pools hold the leviathans for which the region is famous. This river, and the Kraai into which it flows are really big rivers and its fish call for stout tippets. Up at Moshesh's Ford, the Kraai resembles a miniature Fish River Canyon, with a sheer drop of a hundred metres from the road to the river far below. Boulders as big as a small house litter the riverbed and its deep green pools clearly have big fish potential.

The drought had however severely affected most rivers and the fishing was far from what Barkly

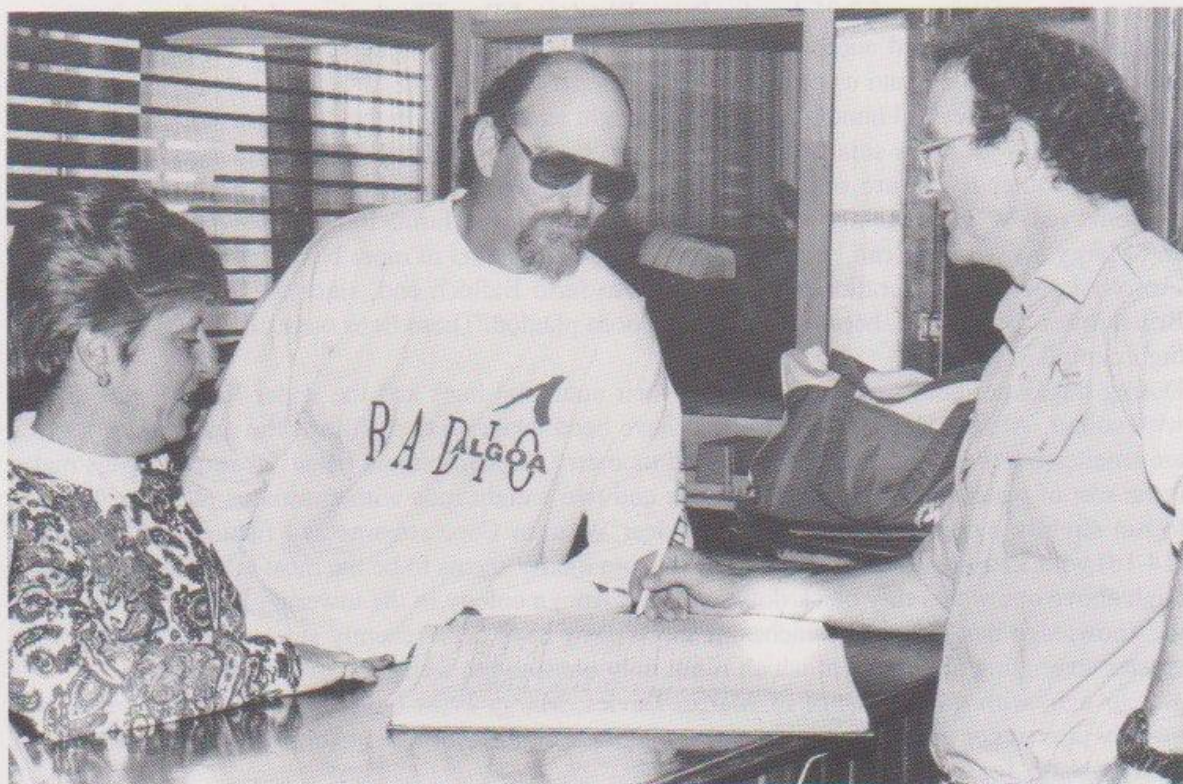
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Wild rainbow trout in 29km of virgin waters on the upper Bokspruit, similar to Witels but most fish in the 3/4lb to 1 1/2lb range. Occasional 3lb + monsters can be taken but be prepared to hike through broken country in the Southern Drakensberg mountains, higher than in the Western Cape, with peaks of 10 000ft above sea-level in the Barkly East district. This area is completely pristine, never before opened to fly-fishermen and is excellent for dry fly and nymph fishing in crystal clear water. Accommodation is available 50m from the river in a magnificent fully equipped three bedroomed cottage built at the turn of the century. Each bedroom has a double and a single bed. In order that your culinary skills be exercised on the days bag, the kitchen has been equipped with a gas and a wood stove. Chill your refreshments in a gas fridge and heat the water for the modern bathroom in a wood-fired "donkey". Solar powered lights or paraffin lanterns are for use at night. Bring your own food, refreshments, toiletries and tackle, the rest is waiting for you at the end of the road [and the (telephone) line] in the Bokspruit.



*For more information please contact Dave Walker
at 04542 and ask for 7211 or write to
PO Box 15, Barkly East, 5580.*



FFA chairman, Derek Thomas, books in, watched by Drakensberg Hotel proprietors, Barry and Rosalie Kalish.



Discussing the Expo program are BWTA chairman, Dave Walker (left), secretary Margy Frost and Ed Herbst.

can provide at its best. Nevertheless despite these conditions a number of large fish were caught among them a rainbow of 2,25 kgs by Brian Rhodes of Port Elizabeth on the Sterkspruit using a size 2 Mrs Simpson and another slightly larger rainbow of 6 lbs captured by Tony Kietzman of Johannesburg on the Kraai using a size 4 Mrs Simpson. The Expo participants averaged about 7 to 10 fish a day and several hundred trout were caught and released in the 3-day period.

For someone who loves small streams however, the aptly named Willow Stream is hard to beat. When the other rivers are running too high or too low to be fishable, the Willow provides a welcome retreat. For much of its length it runs through the farm, Balloch, belonging to Graham and Margy Frost. There can be few streams in the country set in more beautiful surroundings. The Frosts are the third generation of their family to farm Balloch and, since the 1920s, thousand of British trees such as elm, beech and oak have been planted. These trees were chosen because of the high rainfall in the area.

During the Expo these trees had taken on their autumnal hues and the upper Willow was ablaze with colour. Although fish of up to a kilo have been taken on the Willow, the majority of its fish are smaller but there are many of them and its merry disposition and beautiful surroundings make it the sort of water on which one fishes one and two weight rods with enormous pleasure. It tends to run slightly more milky than the ultra-clear Western Cape streams and fishing small nymphs (14-16) with a strike indicator about a metre from the fly seems to be the most effective method.

High above one wheel tiny black dots - vultures from a colony in the towering krantzes nearby and the knowledge that the upper reaches of the Willow have been recently stocked with Brown trout creates an angling environment which is not only unusual but well-nigh irresistible.

A year ago, with the assistance of Martin Davies, Margy Frost built a trout hatchery which has quickly proved commercially viable and is playing a significant role in supplying local waters with rainbows and, for the first time, browns.

Balloch is conveniently situated close to some of the major rivers such as the Kraai, the Sterk, the Joggem and the Frosts offer a very comfortable guest rondavel which sleeps two and has its own bathroom. The cottage and three meals a day can be had for R100 a day which, considering the surroundings and the fishing available, I consider very reasonable.

For those seeking the very best that flyfishing in Barkly has to offer the best albeit most expensive method is to hire the services of a professional guide. Men like Tony Biggs of Trout Adventures Africa (021) 26-1057 or Bruce Goldie who guides for Dave Walker's Gateshead Lodges company (04542) 7211/7502 can provide unforgettable fishing. They know the waters intimately and can often point out the precise lies of the biggest fish. In addition they provide a complete hassle-free package which includes transport, comfortable accommodation and good food.

Barkly East is Mrs Simpson country but there is a lot of merit in presenting the fish with something they have not seen before. Bruce Goldie says the traditional flies such as Mrs Simpson, Walker's Killer, Black and Peacock Woolly Worms and dry flies such as the RAB, Humpies, DDD and Wulffs work throughout the year. In April as the rivers become lower and clearer he switches to smaller nymphs - that crunchy peacock concoction the Zug-bug being particularly effective - and terrestrial patterns such as beetles and ants. In November and December it is back to bigger patterns as the rains increase the water level again.

As always at the Expo there was a lot to learn when one wasn't fishing. A variety of talks was given, the highlights of which were a slide-illustrated talk by Tom Sutcliffe, author of the recently published book, "Reflections on Flyfishing" on catching Tigerfish in the Okavango and Ian Lehr, chairman of the Cape Piscatorial Society, who gave a learned and entertaining exposition on the history and usage of the dry fly. There was also the opportunity to see some of the best fly-tiers in the country in action and watching the speed, dexterity and skill with which people like Tom Sutcliffe tied the DDD and Hugh Huntley the Red-Eyed Damsel Nymph was both an education and inspiration to many in the audience.

That the Expo was an undoubted success, despite the drought-affected fishing, is in large measure due to the fact that the Barkly community at large supported it whole-heartedly and put a huge amount of effort into making their visitors feel welcome.

In addition to Spoornet who contributed several thousand rand to the endeavour, the Barkly East Municipality hosted the opening night cocktail party. On the Saturday morning, breakfast for the



Debbie Robertsen (left) and Cathy Sephton help Ronnie Pitt of East London to register for the Expo.



Watched by Dr Willie van Niekerk, Tom Sutcliffe hooks a Rainbow on the Willow stream.

fishermen was provided at the Orpen Memorial Hall at Moshesh's Ford by the women of the Barkly East NG Church and, in the afternoon, tea and snacks were provided by members of the Moshesh's Ford Tennis Club. On Saturday evening the Barkly East Lions Club provided the braai and salads at a well-attended dance in the town hall.

On Sunday afternoon guests were asked to complete a detailed questionnaire assessing their views on the fishing provided, accommodation, access to water, signposting, maps and other information available and their general comments.

The Association has gone to a lot of trouble and expense in having signposts made and map brochures printed to ensure that guests do not get lost. The brochure makes the following points:

THE BARKLY WILD TROUT ASSOCIATION

was established...

- * To provide excellent river- and still-water trout fishing.
- * To promote the aims and objectives of the Association and the Federation of Southern African Flyfishers.
- * To promote flyfishing in the North Eastern Cape particularly on waters which have not previously been open to flyfishers.
- * To protect, regulate and improve the quality of these trout waters by:
 - (1) encouraging the active participation of landowners in accordance with sound principles of land and water conservation and management.
 - (2) applying suitable stocking strategies.
 - (3) stream improvement in consultation with the authorities and the best trout fishery management advice available.
- * To promote orderly flyfishing activity and adherence to the highest ethical standards among all flyfishers.

BOOKING PROCEDURE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

- * Day permits can be purchased from reception at the Drakensberg Hotel, Barkly East and all reservations must be made through the hotel to avoid double-bookings.
- * Rods are dispatched on a "first come first serve" basis.
- * Member's farms are signposted at the entrance/s and beats are marked. Do not trespass, ever.
- * In addition to the brochure, directions are available from the hotel staff.
- * Flyfishers with valid FOSAF membership are entitled to permits at a discount rate.
- * Local information can be sought from:

Bruce Goldie (04542) 214(h), 158(w) - Flyfishing and waters

Barry Kalish (04542) 277 - Accommodation and directions.

The Chairman, BWTA, PO Box 15, Barkly East 5580. Telephone (04542) 7211, fax (04542) 3221.

The Secretary, BWTA, PO Box 291, Barkly East 5580. Telephone (04542) 7431.

GENERAL RULES

1. Fishing by fly only with recognised flyfishing tackle and provincial licence.
2. Size, bag limits and season determined by each member.
3. Please complete the angling return and hand it in at the hotel or place it in the respective post boxes. It is vital for the management of our waters.
4. Please leave gates as you found them. Should you find one open, please let the owner know.
5. Other than trout, leave fauna and flora as you found them.
6. Please do not drive through lands of any description, ever.
7. Please do not litter and fires are prohibited.
8. Pets may be allowed by prior arrangement at the owner's risk.
9. Please report to landowner/s and he/she can provide you with the most recent information about their waters. They would also like to know about your day's fishing on their property.
10. Always remember that you are on private property which is precious to the owner. Treat it as such.
11. Please remember that flyfishing on BWTA waters is an honour and a privilege, not a right
One unmindful flyfisher could irreparably damage the excellent relationship that others have worked long and hard to establish.

12. The right of access to members waters is reserved.

As we left Barkly for the long journey back to Cape Town we were struck by the fact that there was very little sign of agricultural activity - no crops and very little livestock. Barkly has long been renowned as one of the richest wool areas in the country but, with the glut of both wool and meat on world markets, the income of farmers has dropped substantially at the very time that the cost of incidentals such as fertilizer, farm machinery and labour has seen a dramatic increase.

In short, Barkly is facing the same ineluctable process of growing unemployment and depopulation as other South African rural areas. Locals say the town is slowly dying and, with a large retailing firm having gone under recently there is a lot of evidence to support this contention. It is thus both praiseworthy and logical that farmers there are seeking to diversify their means of generating income.

Several members of the Association provide accommodation for visiting flyfishermen and women and others have plans to build accommodation specifically for this purpose. Such accommodation has the advantage of being close to rivers and dams thus cutting out the travelling which would be necessitated if one were staying in town. At the moment accommodation is provided by:

1. Hosts - Orrock and Marie-Louise Robertsen
 Farm - **Twee Zusters**
 Address - PO Box 32, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (05442) ask for 5402
 Tariff - Full board - R80 pp
 B/B - R40 pp
 Rivers - Saalboom - 1 hour to all other BWTA waters.

2. Hosts - Basil and Ronnie Dormehl
 Farm - **Lower Ross Trevor**
 Address - PO Box 58, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (04542) ask for 2103
 Tariff - Full board - R80 pp
 B/B - R40 pp
 Rivers - Kraai - 1 hour max to all other BWTA waters.

3. Hosts - Klasie Steyn
 Farm - **The Caves**
 Address - PO Box 275, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (04542) ask for 7903
 Tariff - Self catering - R40 pp
 Rivers - Sterkspruit, Bell. 45 mins to all other BWTA waters.

4. Hosts - Christopher Sephton
 Farm - **Fetcani Glen**
 Address - PO Box 88, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (04542) ask for 7412
 Tariff - Self catering - R100 - 6 people
 Self catering - R150 - 10 people
 Self catering - R200 - 14 people
 Rivers - Vlooiakraal, Willowstream, Dams - 30 mins to all other BWTA waters.

5. Hosts - Dave Walker
 Farm - 6 farm houses and cottages, 6 people each
 Address - PO Box 15, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (04542) ask for 7211
 Fax - (04542) 322
 Tariff - Self catering - R150 - 4 people, R35 pp for extra persons

- does full board, and B/B as well
- Rivers - Bokspruit, Riflespruit, Sterkspruit, 45 mins to all other BWTA waters.
6. Hosts - Paul and Janis Sephton
Farm - **Pitlochrie**
Address - P Bag Pitlochrie, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 2440/2431
Tariff - Self catering - R120 - 2 people
Self catering - R150 - 4 people
Rivers - 1 hour max to all BWTA waters.
7. Hosts - Graham and Margy Frost
Farm - **Balloch**
Address - PO Box 291, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 7431
Tariff - Full Board R60 pp - 2 people only
Self catering - R30 pp
Rivers - Willowstream, Vlooiakraal - 45 mins to any other BWTA waters.
8. Hosts - Grant and Cathy Sephton
Farm - **Burnbrae**
Address - PO Box 123, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 7403
Tariff - B/B, Self catering - R40 pp
Rivers - Willow stream, Vlooiakraal - 45 mins max to all other BWTA waters.
9. Hosts - Debbie Robertsen
Farm - **Middle Drumbo**
Address - PO Box 173, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 7940
Tariff - B/B, Self catering - R50 pp
Rivers - Kraai, 1 hour max to all other BTWA waters.
10. Hosts - Marie-Louise Robertsen
Locality- **Louise se huisie in Barkley East**
Address - PO Box 32, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 5402
Tariff - Self catering - R150 - 4 people, R30/35 pp for extra persons
Rivers - Central to all BWTA waters. 1 hour max.
11. Hosts - Gavin and Melly Small
Farm - **Saxony Merino Farm**
Address - PO Box 3, Barkly East 5580
Tel - (04542) ask for 5402
Tariff - Self catering - R150 - 4 people, R30/35 pp for each extra person
Rivers - Langkloof, 1 hour max to all other BWTA waters.
12. Hosts - Hanna Reeders
Locality- **Rubicon**. Old stone school converted into 4 flats
Address - PO Box 5, Rhodes 5582
Tel - (04542) ask for 9002
Tariff - Self catering - R
Rivers - Bell, Bokspruit, Sterkspruit, Riflespruit, 1 hour to all other BWTA waters.
13. Hosts - Tinie Small



Dr Willie van Niekerk opening the Spoornek/FOSAF Trout Expo in Barkly East.



Basil Hersov and Ian Ovenstone at the official opening of the Expo

- Farm - **Glen Nesbitt**
 Address - PO Box 197, Barkly East 5580
 Tel - (04542) ask for 7322
 Tariff - Self catering - R150.- 4 people, R30/35 pp for extra person.
 Rivers - Sterkspruit, Bokspruit, Riflespruit, Bell, 1 hour max to all other BWTA waters.
14. Hosts - Mariaan Henning
 Farm - **Mertoun and Lovedale**
 Address - PO Box 25, Rhodes 5582
 Tel - (04542) ask for 9013
 Tariff - B/B R40 pp
 Rivers - 1 hour max to all other BWTA waters.
15. Hosts - Hannelie Nel
 Farm - **Park Gate Farm Holiday**
 Address - PO Box 13, Rhodes 5582
 Tel - (04542) ask for 9003
 Tariff - B/B R40 pp
 Rivers - Bell, Bok, Sterk, Rifle.

In March 1983 Clive Hatton of Natal took a rainbow of 8lbs 15ozs from the Longkloof River and the next day, fishing the same river, his companion Sean Larkin took one of 8lbs 4ozs (3,760kg). Six years later, at 9.30am, on March 29, 1989 the current mayor of Barkly East, Mr Tjaart Steenekamp took a three-year-old male rainbow of 10lbs 7ozs (4,75kg) while fishing the Clearwater stream, a tributary of the Kraai River.

Fish of more than a kilogram are often caught in the Barkly area and many of the tributaries of the bigger, more famous rivers provide virtually virgin fishing, never seeing an angler from one year's end to the next. Through the Barkly Wild Trout Association these waters are slowly becoming available. However the Association controls only about a tenth of what is available in the area. The only way that flyfishermen and women will gain access to the other nine hundred kilometres of water estimated to exist in Barkly is by showing the still-hesitant farmers that own these rivers that the BWTA project can bring money into the region and that flyfishermen can be trusted to act in a responsible and conservation-conscious way.

The farmers in the North-eastern Cape are warm, hospitable, salt-of-the-earth people and they control the access to some of the finest flyfishing waters available anywhere. The greater the support they get from flyfishermen who show that they respect the farmer's property and his needs, the sooner that access will be granted to us.



Inge Haselau fishing the Willow stream