

HAWAII STYLE

.....Fly Fishing Hawaii Style

By John daRoza

The island of Oahu holds a marvelous secret for fly fishers. Amongst the other “fun in the sun” activities complimented with tropical fruit drinks and general rest and relaxation, fly fishers can now cast their lines to the elusive Bonefish.

Upon arriving on the island of Oahu, I grabbed the phone directory and started thumbing through the yellow pages to locate a local fly shop. To my amazement I found one—the one and only fly shop on the island, “Nervous Water Fly Fishers”.

I called the fly shop to inquire about the surf fishing for the local reef fish. I knew there were many different types of reef fish that come in all different shapes and sizes, because I had seen many of them before while snorkeling on previous trips to the Hawaiian Islands. I thought the only questions that remained were what to use and where to go. In retrospect, this was just the beginning of my Hawaiian fly fishing education.

In Hawaii there is no need for a fishing permit and there are no state fishing licenses as all the ocean waters are fair game to everyone. Many of the island’s residents still practice the fishing techniques of their ancestors such as gill netting, good for the native people of Hawaii so they can enjoy their heritage of the waters, but terrible for the fish because the local fishermen normal keep everything they catch. Unfortunately, little by little, the locals are depleting their own great fisheries.

Clayton Yee’s shop, Nervous Water Fly Fishers, is located about ten miles inland of the famous beaches of Waikiki. This is where my eyes were about to be opened to the fly fishing gold mines of Oahu. Once Clay met me in person and felt confident that I would release any fish I caught, he began to divulge his secrets of the Hawaiian Bonefish flats.

Arriving at one of Clay’s secret fishing holes just around daybreak, I tied on a “Clay’s Mantis”, which is just one of his many personal fly creations. As we walked out into the knee deep waters of the flats we spotted our first Bone. I cast to the cadence of Clay’s directions, “Cast 20 feet out towards 12 o’clock, put it down, strip, strip, stop, set the hook, Fish On!

It was a beautiful beast; the bonefish immediately started stripping line like a raging bull. The fish did not let up until almost 200 yards of backing had been pulled from my reel. Now the battle began for me as I started to retrieve my line. I wound feverishly to try to recoup my line to no avail. The moment I thought I had the upper hand, the bonefish would dart off in an opposite direction taking more line with him.

After ten minutes of fruitlessly reeling in, I was finally able to recover my fly line as the bonefish started to tire. As the fish circled in one direction, I backed up in the opposite direction so that Clay was able to tail the fish. What a terrific catch and such a beautiful fish! After a few photographs, Clay released this one of his "children". This is when I learned that the "flats" were Clay's office and daycare, for he considers the fish to be his children. And as a good parent, he kissed all of his children before setting them free back into the water.

The day progressed with many more sightings of fish, including bonefish, barracuda, trumpet fish, and trevally. I was able to hook and land several more bonefish with the help of Clay's keen eyes. Although the water of the flats appears to be transparent, it is difficult to spot the bonefish because they blend in so well with the coral and sandy bottom. With Clay's excellent ability to scan the water of the flats and pinpoint these "torpedo fish", it is no secret why he is called Bonefish Clay!

I originally had scheduled a four hour guided trip with Clay, but once I was introduced to the Hawaiian Flats and Clay's children, an entire day was not enough! The missed opportunities only enticed me to return again another day.

To enjoy this Hawaiian bonefish experience, you would need to have: Due to the nature of the Hawaiian weather patterns, it is normal to experience 15 mph winds throughout the day. I would recommend a Sage RPLXi 8 weight rod and a good salt water reel with at least 200 yards of backing. You will also need rubber "flats booties" to protect your feet and polarized sunglasses to aid your sight into the water. And, of course, you will need plenty of sun protection such as a Columbia Bahama Hat, Ex Officio Airstrip Shirt and Travel Convertible Pants, not to mention, a fanny pack with a water bottle and room for a camera.

An outing with Bonefish Clay is an adventure you cannot miss when visiting the beautiful island of Oahu. For more information regarding fly fishing in Hawaii, contact Clayton "Bonefish" Yee at Nervous Water Fly Fishers, 3434 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816. His phone number is (808) 734-7359, and his email address is: nervouswater@netscape.net

John daRoza was the CFFU Secretary for