



AUSTIN FLY FISHERS

January 2021
Volume 23, Issue 1



Kathi Harris with bonefish
caught at Turneffe Flats, Belize



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President's Message by David Bush

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I'm sure I speak for virtually everyone when I wish good riddance to 2020! Covid-19 vaccinations have already been administered to millions of the most vulnerable Americans which I hope bodes well for 2021. I can't wait for Austin Fly Fishers to get back to our regular face-to-face monthly meetings and other group activities.

For many Austin Fly Fishers members, January means it's time to renew your AFF membership as well as your Fly Fishers International membership. If you've let your membership lapse or have been considering joining, now is a good time to get restarted or started. Simply go to austinflyfishers.com/membership/ and member.flyfishersinternational.org/general/register_member_type.asp? to take care of your AFF and FFI memberships, respectively. If you're a first-time AFF member, note that FFI dues are included in your first year AFF dues. In subsequent years you'll need to renew with FFI directly.

Members of AFF are able to participate in club fly fishing outings, conservation projects, and organized casting instruction. On the other hand, our monthly meetings featuring interesting speakers and our monthly newsletter are available to everyone.

As a charter member of FFI, AFF receives many benefits including deep discounts on fly fishing gear that can be used for fundraising purposes, access to quality educational materials, club insurance, non-profit status, and access to conservation grants as well as many other benefits.

In addition to FFI's club benefits, individual FFI members get access to excellent online events that include fly tying instruction from world-class fly tiers, casting instruction from master fly casting instructors, fly fishing techniques, as well as conservation topics. For anyone interested in becoming a Certified Casting Instructor, FFI provides instruction and a certification

process for those wanting to help others improve their casting skills. If you're a budding fly tier, FFI offers their Fly Tying Group which brings together many of the art's best tiers for organized learning. There is also the Fly Tying Skills Award Program for those whose skills have met the organization's high standards. FFI offers several other benefits including gear discounts from participating manufacturers as well as discounts for travel and insurance.

Once again, we will be broadcasting our monthly meeting live on Facebook which can also be viewed at a later time. To participate, go to our Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/atxflyfishers/ at 7:00 pm on Thursday, January 21, to join live. Alternatively, if you are a member of the Austin Fly Fishers Facebook Private Group, go to www.facebook.com/groups/22082405715/ at the same time. If possible, I encourage you to join the meeting in real time so you have the opportunity to ask questions of our speakers. We will be going live a bit before 7:00, so feel free to drop in a little early to make sure you're all set.

Be safe,
Dave

Financial Report

by Jim Robinson

12/1/2020 to 12/31/2020

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Begin Bal. Checking | \$18,729.35 |
| Income: | |
| Dues | \$3,748.17 |
| Total Income | \$3,748.17 |
| Disbursements | |
| Total Disbursements | \$00.00 |
| Net | \$3,748.17 |
| Unencumbered: | \$13,806.17 |
| Encumbered Funds: | |
| Casting for Recovery | \$2,365.52 |
| SKIFF | \$6,305.83 |
| Ending Bal-Checking | \$22,477.52 |

The Permit are Coming! by Kathi Harris and Gary Heintschel



Fishing in Belize December 5 – 12, 2020

Sitting in the 18-foot skiff tucked snugly near a tiny islet, waiting out a brief tropical squall at Turneffe Flats, I reflected on our trip so far. In the past 1 ½ days, we had caught about 3 dozen bonefish and an assortment of small jacks, grunts and snapper while casting from the bow or wading near the fringe reef of the Turneffe Atoll.

Our guide for the week was Alton Jeffords. Knowing this was to be our first time fishing in Belize, he cleverly took us on Day One to a resident school of cooperative bonefish. Used to sight-casting for redfish from the bow of a poled skiff, we had the odd, but fun, experience of semi-blind casting to bonefish with our 8-weights from the bow while anchored. We used mostly lead-eyed crab patterns all week (raghead, merkin, turneffe, gotchas) and unweighted crabs in the shallows. We next moved on to the reef where we were able to sight cast to schools of bonefish while wading across the coral-strewn flat. While approaching the reef in the skiff, Alton had pointed toward sparkling wavelets in the low surf and asked, "Do you see the twinkling Christmas lights?" I squinted then asked, "Are those fish?" Alton said, "Those are bonefish tails you can see from here." Cool. Very cool.

We had been introduced to Alton the previous morning following breakfast at the Turneffe Flats Lodge, a full service fishing and dive resort with spectacular scenery and a friendly, professional staff. The lodge owners, Karen and Craig Hayes, operate primarily on solar power, practice resource conservation and donate one percent of revenues to conservation efforts. Craig is the Board Chairman of The Turneffe Atoll Trust, founded in 2002 to promote the sustainable use of the Atoll and protect it from destructive practices.

After hearing the other guests' stories of chasing, and mostly not catching, permit, we told Alton we wanted to try for these tricky, picky fish. Tuesday morning was partly sunny and breezy. We fished our way south, from the skiff, along the eastern edge of the atoll and had a couple of shots at permit before clouds turned off the sun and the fish disappeared.

We headed further south and pulled into a deep, clear, turquoise-tinted channel where Alton anchored to place the bow in a favorable casting position. It was my (Kathi's) turn on the bow, but first I needed to use the 'facilities'. I declined Alton's offer to take us to a nearby island, stating that I could just go over the side of the boat. Gary was unhurriedly cleaning his sunglasses, Alton was 'studying the shoreline' aft and I

The Permit are Coming! cont.

was in mid-relief when Alton called out, "The permit are coming!" I panic-scrambled to get my pants back up while Alton tried to keep his eye on the approaching fish and his back turned to me. "Somebody grab a rod!", he yelled. Seven seconds of utter chaos later, Gary was on the bow, rod in hand, but it was already too late. A large school of about 12 permit had glided past the boat and vanished. Gary eventually had a couple more chances at permit then it was time to make the one-hour trek back to the lodge. Gary caught a large bar jack and a bonefish but I ended the day with nothing but a comical sob story for happy hour. I later named the crime site "Pants Down Channel".

For the next two days, we mostly pursued permit, to mostly no avail. We did return to Pants Down Channel to see if any more permit would come by. They did. Gary was on the bow, casting crisply in almost every direction at the permit quickly circulating around the submerged rocks. Then, "Fish on!", Gary hooked one, seemed to have it, then boom! It was gone, broken off. Oh, the heartbreak.

Our final fishing day we woke up to clouds and a brisk easterly wind, making the sea too rough to travel outside the reef to Pants Down Channel. We spent the morning searching and fishing south between the reef and outer edge of the atoll, then moved into the calm, protected waters of the vast central lagoon. With no luck in the morning, we relocated to wade the reef, where I landed a bonefish at our first stop. We moved north along the reef and, just as we started our next wade, I spotted large fins to the south that Alton identified as permit. Then, surprisingly, he said he was going to change the fly on the 10-weight permit rod! Alton changed the fly quickly to a larger crab but the permit were just as quick. Gary barely had time for a cast. The permit spooked, turned and rocketed away. Darn! We saw several more permit near the surf and missed two more shots, for which we had plenty of excuses.

Despite the missed permit, I found I enjoyed wade fishing on the reef the most. On a windy, cloudy day, we could get pretty close to the bonefish and catch a few. There's also plenty of other reef denizens to catch your attention. When I saw two shoe boxes with eyes and puckered lips swim by, I pointed while shouting at Alton over the sound of the surf, "What are those?" He peered at the water and shouted back, "porcupine fish". Cool. Very cool. And the permit are still coming.



Alton Jeffords, Guide

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The following individuals who made presentations to our club in 2017/2019. Please follow the links to get more information on the services they provide. You won't be disappointed.

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Capt. Billy Trimble – <http://trimbleflyfishing.com/> Fly Fishing Rockport/Texas Coastal Bend

Chris Johnson – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Living Waters Fly Shop and Central Texas Guide

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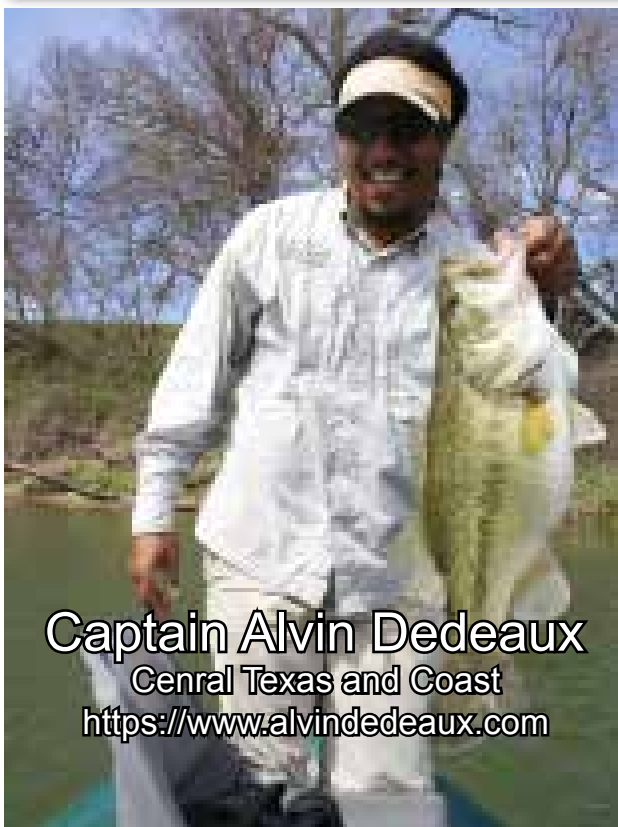
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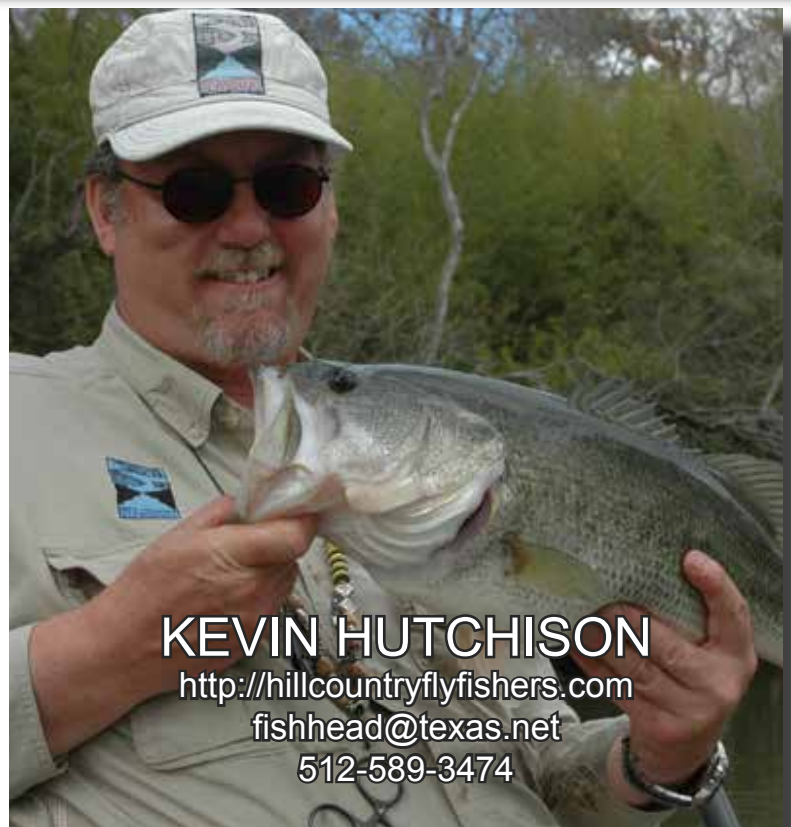
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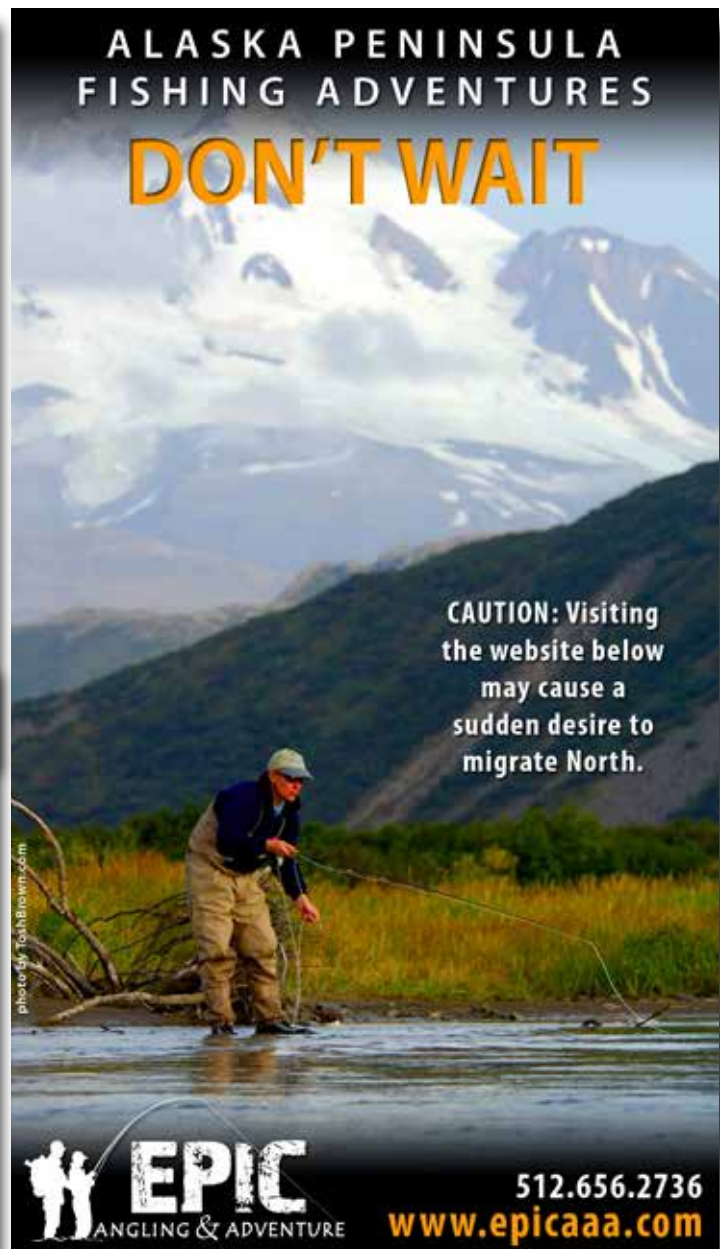
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