



River Rap

*Roubidoux Fly Fishers Association
April, 2010 (April?? It's already May 10th!)*

Upcoming Events to Note on Your Calendar

News and Views

RFFA participated in the **Evening with Wildlife** program in Rolla. The consensus among our participants was that the advertising was invisible and that the attendance was way down. Both Rich Williams and Dave Tharp managed to capture the imaginations of several children by both tying and giving away flies. Max tied some big muthas in prep for saltwater but he didn't give any away. That's probably why they didn't work when the time came to use them. Karma ain't no fun!

The **Earth Day** program on the Fort has been rescheduled to 12 June. Shall we dance? Call Max if you can come out and play. Tiers, casters or talkers are all needed.

Project Healing Waters should start up later in May. More on that program later in the newsletter.

Next Meeting is May 19th in the Waynesville City Park. It will be our first picnic since we decided to return to our roots as a fishing club instead of an eating and talking society. Call or email Lou right quick so she can get a good headcount. Food is on the club (membership appreciation night!) for all paid-up members.



Streamside News and Fishing Reports

[Send your fishing reports to Max]

There Were Scorpions in the Bathroom

By Lou Runnalls

"What the heck is that?" is what I said when I caught my first Rio Grande perch (aka Rio Grande cichlid) and brought it to hand. Funny thing is, they told me I was going to say that and I thought they were joshing

me but they weren't kidding, I did say it. Who are they? The good folks at the Gulf Coast Council Expo which was held in New Braunfels, Texas on 15, 16 and 17 April this year.

And just why would anyone say that about a fish? Well, the Rio Grande perch just looks a lot different than any other fish I have ever caught. It has well, spots. Lots of them. All over its body. And the spots are white. It is the only cichlid native to the United States and the last fish I needed to catch to complete my version of a Texas Grand Slam. The other two, a Guadalupe Bass and a red breasted sunfish, were caught earlier in the trip.



I was invited to tie at the Gulf Coast Council and while innocently checking on the fishing in the book "Flyfisher's Guide to Texas" I ran across a reference to Guadalupe bass, red breasted sunfish and the Rio Grande cichlid. Now the fishin' mission was on!

Guadalupe River State Park would be a great starting point for my quest and close to the Expo. The first day I fished, I caught a short, fat Guadalupe bass. And that is another fish that is rather unique in appearance. It looks like a cross between a smallmouth and largemouth bass, with a mouth like a smallie, but a lateral line like a largemouth, but broken, with vertical bars going up its sides and with faint rows of spots on its belly. It is unique in that its native range is only the Hill Country of Texas. They don't seem to grow very big, the biggest brought to hand was about 12" but feisty! Man-o-man, be ready for a fight all the way to the bank!



Brought to hand were various other sunfishes – to include some really mean green sunfishes and long ear sunfish. While fishing a popper above the "swimmin' hole", I ran into a nice young man who suggested I go to the South Llano River State Park for the completion of my grand slam. Seems he is the state record holder on Rio Grande cichlids, having caught one weighing a whopping 1.59 pounds and was foot long! On a fly rod no less, and in the Llano River.

The second day of my quest started cool and cloudy, a welcome relief for this "northern" girl from Missouri. All too soon the sun would be out and the temperature would climb to a balmy 86°. Thank goodness I was in the water! I drove to the South Llano River State Park outside of Junction and began my quest for the elusive red breasted sunfish and Rio Grande cichlid.

The snakes were only starting to come out I was told so watching were I was stepping was just as important as where I was casting. A local said I was just in time since they can rarely go without seeing a snake in May, June & July. least. Following directions bar (hmmm, they must have catfishing or something and I THAT mistake), I maneuvered and along the bank to one was able to bring to hand a some more green sunfish. But breasted sunfish! They look a except, there is no white which is only as wide as their breast gets bright red. the life list. Finally, about mid



Fishing was tough to say the from a non fisher to a gravel thought I was sitting and am not going to repeat my way down to the river deep hole after another. I few Guadalupe bass and most importantly, a few red lot like our longear sunfish, border around the ear flap, eye, and the breeding males Another cool fish to add to day, I had had enough and

decided to try my luck at Buck's Pond, one of two ponds there in the park and have a shore lunch.

While looking over this beautiful pond and sitting and eating, what should appear, but a few fish hitting the surface. Popper time! And they were rambunctious to say the least. They would do one of two things – either come shooting out of the dark water like little torpedoes or sneak up right under the popper, then hit it and run like heck. It was a welcome break from the current of the river. AND I caught my biggest red breasted sunfish there. The spawn wasn't on yet because he was still more orange chested than red, but it was great catching because he was a handful.

The next couple days were a whirl wind of being a tourista, going to the local fly "shop" & Cabelas's in Buda, TX; seeing the Alamo, San Antonio River Walk and a place called the El Mercado; tying at the Expo and just being a tourist. Friday night was the highlight, with the Fly Fishing Film Tour along with a fajita dinner. The chow was great, and the films were better. If you've never been, it's a bunch of shorts (parts of full length films clipped in such a manner to still tell the story so you want to see the feature length film) on upcoming movies – a few which are already out – such as Once in a Blue Moon. All I can say is if you get a chance to go see it.

Sunday dawned to a slight drizzle which seemed to last the whole time I was packing up, but was only the second time rain fell, and I was there a week. Enough time remained for one more chance to fish before having to hit the road. I had wanted to wade across the stream to the far side and fish down river from there, which seemed to be a spot not fished often. And I am so glad I did, because that was where I caught the Rio Grande cichlid, casting up under the trees to the bank and doing a slow strip back. I had been given some advice – to tie some really small black flies since the cichlids mouth is real small, and black was their favorite color. Small size 14 Secret Flies were my ticket. I brought a bunch of other fish to hand first – greenies, and Guadalupes, and even a few long ear sunfishes. But then I caught one that I said out loud "What the heck is that!?!". My last fish to complete my Texas Grand Slam – a Rio Grande cichlid. I couldn't believe it. I thought I was going to have to come back and finish my quest next year. Nope, not this time, BUT I will be back next year.

And so that was it for me. Quest completed; the road called me on to bigger but maybe not better adventures.

And now for a few particulars –

If you go, may I suggest at least two books – "Flyfisher's Guide to Texas" by Phil H. Shook and "Fly-Fishing the Texas Hill Country" by Kevin Hutchison. I haven't read them cover to cover, but used the parts I needed to. Very good references.

Texas State Parks - <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/> have a unique system – when you pay to get into the park either over night or just for a day, you can fish for free within the park. No buying no license. Too cool for school.

And yes, watch the critters. Those raccoons wear masks for a reason. I was sitting around, enjoying the last night's fire and I turned around and two of them weren't 10 feet from me trying to get up on my picnic table. I had already washed my dishes and put everything up in the truck so they were out of luck. I suggest you do the same since they are known to open coolers and will defend their booty (your food they found in your cooler!).

And YES there were scorpions in the bathroom. The morning I left there I found one in the sink, and someone got it out of there and moved it outside. And either it came back into the other bathroom or there was a second one in there up on the wall. Seems the locals don't really fuss much about them comparing some of their stings to a bee sting. I shook my shoes out every morning and watched where I was going.

Despite the critters, I wouldn't pass up this trip in a million years. Every morning while drinking my coffee I heard wild turkey's gobbling; one night even heard some coyotes yapping at each other. When the clouds went away there seemed to be a billion stars in the sky and cold crisp mornings with frost on the

wind shield because of it. I saw a HUGE buck, still with antlers, and some critter that will remain unknown (big brown, maybe a wood rat?). Waking up in the middle of the night to hear something sniffing at my tent window, and keeping the huge flashlight handy just in case. The emerald green water, the overhanging bluff full of barn swallows, more wildflowers than ought to be allowed by law and the mayfly hatches coming off the water, making some really big fish jump.

Just a wonderful trip. Anyone want to go next year?

From the Editor: This April's newsletter was delayed because of fishing. There is no better reason, nor a finer excuse. That being said, it was a hellacious two weeks, give or take a day.

The first of three adventures started in Arkansas on private water called Spavinaw Creek. It's owned by one of those ridiculously expensive sporting clubs that has properties around the world. One gets a membership (Initiation fee: \$3,000) and then pays a Pope's ransom per month for the privilege of using any of the facilities. Oh, and that does not include staying in their guesthouses, the daily fees for bringing guests, or guide fees should one avail oneself. My visit was "on the cuff" so to speak since I was acting as a river buddy volunteer in the Reel Recovery program for men recovering from cancer. A great program, folks! The use of the facilities and stream was totally gratis to the participants. The owner of the properties is Spring Valley Outfitters and it's a first class operation on all levels. If anybody wants to give me a membership I'll gladly accept. I won't go into detail save to say that of the three men I had the opportunity to serve as buddy/guide/listening post, I put all three on fish and on strange water. None had fly fished previously. The tale of the day from an angler's viewpoint, however, was the virgin fly fisher who caught not one but two fish of a measured 28 inches! And yes, they were different fish....

From the crystal clear waters of Spavinaw to the roiled and ruffled waters of the Gulf off Biloxi. That's about 700 miles (a little more if you turn off the voice of the GPS and suddenly find yourself in the outskirts of New Orleans) for the joy of bouncing around in a boat in four-foot seas, 20 knot winds gusting to 30 plus, and tides running counter to the wind. It's a wonder I have any kidneys left. Out of the four and a half days on the water there was only one bluebird day. Then the wind switched direction from Northwest to East, the seas mounted, and it was off to the races again. On the one good day in the middle of the week I ran out as far as the sea buoy--about five miles into the blue water of the Gulf. Trolled on the way out, fished around the buoy (structure is structure) and ran back into the island. Fished the outer surf; fished the sandspit at the point of the island; fished the bay on the inside of the island. In all that I saw two jacks, one shark, one big bull red, and a small herd of sheepshead. Sheepshead are not prone to taking a fly. The others disappeared during the process of dropping an anchor and pulling the right rod out of the holders under the port and starboard gunwales. It's the first time in my life I've ever been skunked more than one day on saltwater.



That Friday I just gave up. The wind was up again and while I really enjoy boating, my intent (nay, my need) was to fish. By happenstance Doug Goodman was at Eglin AFB for the Explosive Ordinance Demolition memorial service. Made my decision at 7:30 am and by 9:30 I was packed and rolling East into spitting rain and strong gusts blowing my rig (camper and 20-foot boat) from one side of my lane to the other. The memorial was unbelievably moving. Our 5 armed services put 16 names on the wall from the past year's losses. It's hard on the psyche when one is so close to a soldier who does that kind of work for a living. By the way, Doug just left on Friday the 7th for his third tour in the sandbox--once in Kuwait, once in Iraq, and now to Afghanistan. He retires in 18 months....

The last three days were at River of Life Farm on the North Fork of the White--again totally on the cuff serving with Project Healing Waters. There were four soldiers from the Fort Leonard Wood Warrior

Transition Unit participating, plus a Sergeant who came along as their good shepherd. He, by the way, has volunteered to be our inside person in the WTU and will do well. The new rods came in just before I departed. They are TFO four-piece five-weights, and I have lines and reels to match. My plan is to teach casting and fly fishing 101 starting late in May.

So that's it--two superb volunteer experiences that rewarded me spiritually, mentally, and with "Fish on!" serving as bookends to a long drive for what became only a boating exercise, along with being able to surprise Doug and spend some time with him before he went wheels up. By way of explanation for those of you who are somewhat new, Doug is the son I never had. "Nuff said" to quote Chuck....

Mill Creek: Gary and Max fished "da Mill" about three or four weeks back. It's still a beautiful but tough fishing stream. Lots of parr. Gary takes this year's prize, and probably several years back and more in the future, for the world's smallest rainbow legitimately taken on hook and line. The photo says it all...

