

Adventure Fishing – Part 3

First DFT trip to Sterkfontein - November 2008

By Ian Cox

Every now and again one gets to experience something so sublime that it redefines ones understanding of everything else. The clubs recent outing to Sterkfontein was such an occasion.

Who would have guessed that what some say is the world's best still water fly fishing venue is on our doorstep. When last did you sight cast in water so clear you could see the fish 7m or more beneath you and can you remember the last time you took 20 minutes to land a freshwater fish in this country? Then there was the rare treat of being taught to tie the Good Doctor's Foam Beetle by the good Dr Hans van Zyl himself and spending time with Sterkfontein legends Dave Weaver and Dennis De Klerk not to mention the morning spent fishing with that sorcerer with a fly rod, the irrepressibly colorful Zoran Marinkovic.



The Good Doctor's Foam Beetle

The five of us who took part in the Club's November Sterkies trip enjoyed all this and more. Friday afternoon saw Jay Smi,t Ian Cox, Barry, Brad and Mark Woods all forgather at the Sterkfontein Nature Reserve Cottages accompanied as one would expect on a trip like this with far too much food and equipment. Conditions were a far cry from the superb fishing we had been told to expect. The wind was howling and the few boats that had ventured on the dam

seemed be having a bad time of it. Our efforts to catch something in front of the cottages were short lived and unsuccessful.



View from the cottage



Cottages at Sterkfontein Nature Reserve

Happily Saturday dawned clear and relatively calm and by 9am Jay, Dave Weaver and I were heading out across the dam with Dennis De Klerk Barry, Brad, Mark and Dennis De Klerk not far behind.

A spell at North Shore soon demonstrated that the dry fly conditions of the past few days were a thing of the past. We quickly changed to nymphing and moved to the bays around the Qantani resort.



North Shore

The fishing was unlike anything I've experienced before. It was piscatorial equivalent of catching the London underground. Shoals of yellowfish cruised by at regular intervals. All you had to do was get the right fly in front of them at the right time. That proved a bit of a problem as the right fly turned out to be Zoran Marinkovic's F Fly strung New Zealand style behind a Zak. Trouble is while I had a box full of Zaks I had no F Fly's. Hence the F Fly's new name. It's a f!@#%\$^ wonderful fly and is f!@#%\$^ awful if you don't have one in your box. Jay had F Flies and was soon heavily into the fish. Indeed I think it fair to say that, from my perspective at least, he was making an absolute pig of himself.



Dave weaver on the left with Zoran Marinkovic



I found the fishing a lot slower but that was more than adequately compensated by the 2.2kg plus beauty that took a LBJ (little brown job. i.e. a small indiscriminate brown nymph) I had strung behind the ubiquitous Zak. This resulted in lots of satisfying whizzing noises from my reel, a rediscovery of that stuff called backing followed some 20 minutes later the fish pictured below.



We did not see the others at all that day. They also had a good day especially on dry.

We started early on Sunday but might as well have stayed in bed. Conditions were perfect but Dave tells us that the yellows wake up late in spring so much so that you can leave getting on the water until as late as 10am. Not so in midsummer mind you. Apparently you must then be on the water fly at the ready just as the sun comes up. Local knowledge counts a lot.

Midmorning saw us fishless so we moved to a place where the fish were again making like the London underground except this time you could see the shoals coming at you from 300m away. More than enough time to select ones fish. And today I had an F Fly! Ideal conditions for making a pig of oneself one I would have thought but proved not to be the case. A combination of over striking which in Sterkfonein spells break up and not striking at all meant I could only land one fish.

Jay had even less luck.

I do not know how the others did as they were still on the water when we left.

Still it was a wonderful morning's fishing and all in all a superb weekend.

Thank you Jay for organizing this it.