

Bushman's River - Snow Flake Cottage 2015

By Andrew Maher



On the 17th April 2015, four members of the DFT, comprising of three experienced river anglers Marco, Mike (first time on the Bushman's), Ernie and Andrew (first timer to freestone rivers), booked into Snow Flake cottage. The team was split into pairs, with one pair going up river and the other to the large pool downstream of the cottage. The weather was cool, helped by a recent cold front which dropped temperatures with the barometer going up and down through the day. Marco and Andrew went up the river and the river was quiet, the pools had fish but the minute one stepped into the water they scattered. Marco was trying his new Explorer Extender in Nymph mode (10 ft) and in hindsight he acknowledged that it wasn't the best conditions for nymphing as the water was very clear and one couldn't get close enough.



Fishing from the bank was difficult if not impossible given the conditions particularly for Andrew who spent a considerable time unhooking flies from bushes, rocks and grass!! However, around 11:30am the fish started rising, sipping something off or just under the surface. We ran the changes working through fly boxes and didn't yield any fish. The fish went off the rise after an hour or so. Michael and Ernie had a similar tough time at the pool as they hadn't

brought waders and with the cold had opted to fish from the bank however Mike landed the first fish of the trip, a rainbow.

We convened for lunch to compare notes/grab a bite and switch sections. With the weather still overcast and cool, the DFT team flogged the water again for 3 hours and packed it in around 5pm as it got too cold for comfort with no additional fish landed. Needless to say the discussion over the evening braai was about tactics and fly selection.



Saturday morning came and the weather was beautiful with sunny skies, slight breeze up the valley and warmer conditions. Marco had a friend Han Kuildered from the UK (an ex South African here on business) joined us for the weekend. Marco, Han and Andrew again went upriver with Mike and Ernie heading down to the pool. Mike using 4wt/floating line/16" leader and "Billy de Jong" fly (size 14, 3,3mm orange tungsten bead and black CDC body) and very slowly retrieved, got four Brown's up to 12".

Andrew, fishing a hopper pattern with a size 18 brown caddis larva suspended New Zealand style, landed his first river trout, a lovely 12" Brown and missed a second within minutes of this from the same pool. Just three pools up, within sight of the Hatchery the river suddenly came alive, small Rainbows were rising freely and were taking the dry (Hoppers) and caddis larva/blood worms flies readily. A few Browns and many Rainbows came to the net but it seems the trout had a colour preference for red/black/brown but not green despite all the fish having green caddis larva in their stomach contents!!. After lunch using a mixture of dry's, Wolf Spider's, caddis larva and blood worms, a few fish were caught...all rainbows.



Saturday evening after the traditional braai and the mandatory Grappa coffee (thanks Marco), the J Vice got dragged out and Michael demonstrated his emerger pattern which has been highly productive in dams.

Sunday was again cloudy and as we had not had much success before 11:30 am on the days before so we had a leisurely breakfast packed up and hit the water around 10 am. Again the river section within sight of the Hatchery proved where the action was, Marco pulled 8 fish from one pool alone with Han taking 5 and Andrew 2 to round off the weekend. Mike managed another brace of nice sized Brown's up to 16" at the pool before heading home.

Total catch for the weekend came in at 40 fish (8 Brown's and 32 Rainbows).

Guys this was a great weekend and as we all remarked at the end..."Why don't we do this more often?". Do yourself a favour and book for the next DFT trip to a river, it will add a different dimension to your fly-fishing.