

Xplorer scalie weekend

By Ian Cox



The last weekend in September found me at Highover enjoying what has become the far too rare pleasure of a weekend flyfishing trip. Highover is a wonderful resort situated just upstream of the Hela Hela bridge on the Umkomaas river. It is just over an hour's drive away if you live in the upper highway area. The resort offers simple but very comfortable cottages at between R150.00 a night for the bunkhouse and R360.00 a night for the numsome option that comes with en suite ablutions. All are self-catering. You can also camp at R90.00 a night or take a day trip for R50.00.

But here is the thing. The fishing can be seriously good, not that we had such luck and not that that mattered very much. This trip was hosted by Xplorer specifically to introduce fly fishers to scalie fishing techniques in general and Xplorer's new Xtenda Guide series II rods in particular. The weekend also brought with it the first very welcome signs of rain so the barometer was all over the place and this affected the fishing. It wasn't that fish were not about. The lack of rain means that the water is still very clear so we saw fish by the hundreds. It is just that they were not that keen on feeding.

This does not mean that no fish were caught. We all caught enough to make the weekend worthwhile. My jig headed fiery PTN (June 2014 Demo) came into its own catching all my fish except one which I caught on dry. The other stand out fly was a mustard caddis that Jeremy Rochester ties. His fly box was totally cleaned out by hordes of fly hungry fisherman. I was better at protecting mine.



The stand out technique was mono short or Czech nymphing. The idea is to bounce the fly or in this case flies (You fish a dropper as well) along the bottom just under the rod tip while maintaining direct contact with the said flies. This requires one to lose the traditional fly line for bog standard fishing line or monofilament. So you don't need a fly line when doing this. (See article on Scalie weekend.)



The fact that this may not be fly fishing is a minor detail that is quickly forgotten given that it catches fish. Rio manufacture the Euro Nymph fly line for those purists who need to maintain the pretense that what they are doing is fly fishing. Basically it is a length of braid coated with just enough PVC to satisfy the competition judges that it is a fly line.

The standout of the weekend was not really the fishing. It was the company and the food. Xplorer have been running these clinics for a while now and they always put on a good show. This year was no different. The catering was superb and judging by the time people got to bed, the company was convivial. It is definitely an event worth attending. Thank you to John Geils and his team at Xplorer (Jandi) for arranging it.

