



Nile Perch Pre-Trip Info

Nile Perch

Nile Perch need no introduction, as the planet's largest freshwater game fish. Game fish in the true sense - a highly predacious fish that attacks anything that moves, fights to the death with spectacular leaps and tail-walks. For years they have been tackled using boats and gear that wouldn't go amiss in search of marlin and tuna in the deep blue sea. As techniques have improved they are now targeted on lighter spinning gear and often from the shore using tackle you might use to go after pike. Ultimately a disturbed few have hunted them on fly tackle... They occur throughout the Nile system and great lakes, Lake Nasser in Egypt has become synonymous with large perch in clear water, that usually live in the depths of the lake but for a short period of time venture into the shallows to feed on breeding bream. This is when we will be targeting them.



Flyfishing Equipment

Perch:

Rods - on my exploratory trip earlier this year, the Americans I fished with used 9 weights a lot of the time and all fairness you could get away with that for 90 % of the fish that will eat your fly. It's just that every now and then a fish large enough to swallow a Staffordshire terrier will cruise past and you will wish you had not taken a knife to a gun fight! I think a 10 weight is a good compromise, if you can handle something heavier like an 11 or 12 wt all day then do it.

Lines provided a bit of a quandary, fish were always fairly deep, whether cruising or holding, they would be in around 10 feet of water. So, one had to make fairly accurate, well presented casts, while getting the fly down as quickly as possible. I used a variety of shooting heads, and full sink lines, my favourite and most productive was a Lee Wulff type 3 sink line, it loaded quickly, presented well and sank at a good rate. Due to the exciting pioneering nature of the fishing we will be doing, Gareth Jones, the owner of Airflo lines in the UK has offers to custom make a series of Nile perch lines for us. As far as reels are concerned any rugged saltwater reel will do the job, not once were we stripped into our backing as Perch are dogged fighters remaining at close quarters the whole time. However once hooked they need to be stopped from getting back into structure, and nothing short of an excellent drag system will suffice.

Leaders also were an area of debate. Our American counterparts used intricate leaders with butt sections, thinner class sections with thick abrasion resistant shock sections. I found this not only unnecessarily complicated but too many weak spots in the system. Emulating the simplicity of the leaders we use for GT's in the Seychelles I found a level length of 80 pound maxima perfect, especially when a hooked fish would turn tail and head back under a sharp overhang.

Flies could be given two approaches, big and bright, not really looking like much and relying on pure aggression on the fishes behalf, much like a hot orange rapala would. The other approach was more imitative flies. Big profile bream imitations with large eyes and drab beige and olive flanks, there is no doubt that both worked, but it must be said I felt more confident and kept on the imitative flies longer and caught more fish with them.

Other gear essential for this trip include a boga grip, quality light weight flats clothing and above all the best pair of flats boots you can get your hands on. I had a new pair of a very well known flats boots and after 10 days of rock hopping and scrambling around hot, sharp sandstone they looked how I felt!

Tigerfish:

They are a different species to what South Africans catch, they are smaller and thinner, my largest was 7 pounds, which the guide got very excited about. Good fun on a 6 - 9wt, if you have caught big ones on the Zambezi, they

won't excite you. Maybe bring a suitable rod between 2 of you.



Catfish:

Should you have the energy to fish for 24 hours putting out a dead bait at night can result in being picked up by a large vundu or Vargus catfish.

The Bream:

Oreochromus Niloticus are the planets largest bream, they are like dinner plates and the lake record is well over 12 pounds. You can tally up a new species on a 5 wt with a little dry or nymph, but again novelty will wear off when you see something the size of a Victorian bath flash down below you! Once you have caught one you will leave your 5wt on the boat, again bring one light rod to share.

Tactics

The guides encourage you to fish from the boat, after all it is what they do most of. On our exploratory trip we did catch fish from the boat but mostly small (2 - 8 pound range). I feel that larger fish are more wary and sense the boat, by walking you cover more distance, without any noise. By climbing high and being observant you will see fish from quite a distance so working as a team, one person spotting and the other ready with the rod is very effective. Have the guide wait at a pre chosen spot for you, and systematically work your way along the waters edge. Teasing the larger fish up with a hookless rapala is very new and results debatable. I tried it for the first time this year, it works well to show the fish but if you are slow to remove the lure and they mouth it, they are gone! Done carefully it can work well. On a similar vein, hook a small to medium sized fish play it then let it struggle in front of you for a while. Often a large fish will appear and either have a go or swirl and return to its cave, allowing you to have a shot later.



Catch rates and what to expect

Unlike a week's salmon fishing at a boutique lodge where catch statistics can go back a hundred years. Nile perch on fly is new and what we will be doing is still largely experimental. On our exploratory trip we fished hard from dawn to dusk with an hour for lunch, we landed on average 4 fish per day and lost as many, coming lose on the jump. We did not count rats and mice (fish under 5 pounds). We lost two of over 60 pounds and I cast to a fish close on a hundred pounds. The reason you are doing this trip, amongst others, is you will see and more than likely catch the largest freshwater fish of your flyfishing career.

Other methods of fishing:

For those of you part time flyfisherman, trolling and spin casting from the shore is the norm, it is not necessary to cart equipment with you as included in your rate each boat will be equipped with the necessary conventional gear, and we will pay for any lost lures. Refer to the African Angler website for more info on the conventional methods and the expected results.

The facilities:



THIS IS CAMPING IN THE DESERT, BUT ON THE WATER

- it is very basic. The mothership has a cold water shower and a flush toilet, they are cramped and there is very little water pressure as water is pumped straight from the lake. The answer is go bush, walk to the top of a sand dune early in the morning and enjoy an unbelievable view while enjoying an open air crap. In the evening dive into the lake, lather up and rinse off - beautiful! You will sleep in your boat on a very comfortable mattress, either under cover or on the roof under the very spectacular stars. There is bedding and a towel in the bottom storage box at the bottom of each bed. Crocodiles - there are crocodiles, seeing that 75 % of Egypt's population lives on the edge of the Nile, crocodiles and man have clashed for centuries. Bottom line is I saw many big enough to

make a meal of you but all from a distance. I firmly believe they have an inherent fear of man and keep away from the boats and campsites. Snakes and biting insects - this is a true desert environment; there are a lot of snakes, scorpions and spiders. Luckily we are going in Spring before things liven up but a little common sense as far as lifting up rocks and checking your shoes will go a long way.

The food - is very basic, this is not a culinary experience but simply putting in enough calories to keep you going through the day. Breakfasts are often fresh baked rolls, cheese and jams. Lunch is freshly prepared, as is dinner often a basic stew, chicken fillets or overcooked steak, with a carbohydrate like rice.

In summary you will need

Equipment:

- Heavy rod and a spare with matching reel, lines and a spare
- Selection of lighter rods with reels and lines.
- Flies
- Spool of 20.40.60.80 pound nylon
- Stripping/sun gloves
- Boga grip, pliers
- Hook sharpener
- Superglue and varnish to repair flies, spare braided loops line repair kits etc

Other

- Toiletries, basic medical aid kit: Imodium, anti-inflammatory antiseptic and plasters.
- Suntan cream, no bug cream necessary
- A good torch/headlamp, camera

Clothing:

- One relatively smart yet comfortable outfit for travelling in and out of Cairo and doing the pyramids (jeans, trainers, cotton shirt)
- Swimming costume, with a small absorbent towel
- 2 lightweight fishing shirts and pants, preferably zip off longs, some days you will want to give the backs of your legs a rest from the sun.
- A light weight fleece for nighttime, a buff and a hat
- Quality polaroid sunglasses with straps and a spare pair
- Good boots that can get wet, ie flats boots. Or a good pair of cross trainers with ankle support that after getting wet for 10 days and skanky you can just ditch them.
- Comfortable slops for the evenings

Food and drink

- A bland food booster, chilli sauce etc.
- Rehydrant and Game/Energade/Powerade/Gatorade, enough for 5 litres per boat (2 of you) per day
- Good breakfast snack bar, enough for 2 per person per day, energy sweets, jelly babies etc.
- A bottle or two of wine or hard tack. Egyptian beers are cold and delicious and readily available on board,. Do not look to buy anything at duty free in Egypt or once you have arrived, it will cost the same as the trip.



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