

# THE ANGLING REPORT

there are no real guides available, only a knowledgeable boatman who takes anglers where he knows there are fish. Bonefish are strictly a species of opportunity, with the most consistent fishing being for bluefin trevally. Among the 20 other species available are giant trevally, yellowfin and dogtooth tuna, barracuda, wahoo, snapper and others. This is a trip for experienced saltwater anglers who like to figure things out for themselves. It's also a difficult place to access, requiring an overnight in Honolulu before taking an eight-hour flight to the Marshall Islands capitol of Majuro, then another overnight before flying to Bikini. A week-long fishing package, including meals, lodging and transfers was pegged at just under \$3,000.

■ Largemouth bass fishing in recent years has become a sort of redneck joke, replete with jump-suited fishing stars plastered with company logos and boats so overpowered they very nearly leave the water. Wouldn't it be nice if someone rescued the species by organizing a bass fly fishing program? Enter Keith Kaneko of Angling on the Fly in Western **Mexico**. Correspondent Gary Kramer has all the details:

"Arguably, some of the best largemouth bass fishing in North America is found in Western Mexico and specifically at Lakes El Salto and Mateos. Both offer quality and quantity bass fishing, are easy to reach and have first-class lodges. However, until recently the guides and boats were not suited to serious fly fishing.

"Enter Keith Kaneko of Angling on the Fly (916-539-3474; [www.AnglingOnTheFly.com](http://www.AnglingOnTheFly.com)). In 2006, he began discussing a dedicated fly-fishing program with owner Billy Chapman Jr. and his son/lodge manager Chappy Chapman. Kaneko knew that bass have not generally been a front line species in the fly-fishing travel market. However, given the quality fishing at El Salto and Mateos and the good lodge experience and service provided by Anglers Inn, he knew he

could create a product fly fishermen would like.

"In the fall of 2006 and again in December 2007, he and his team of three anglers/guides put on a training program for the staff at both lakes. They taught the local guides the special needs of fly fishermen, how to actually use fly rods, fly selection and the other nuances of the sport. They also modified several boats and installed casting platforms. Since then, Angling On The Fly has sent several groups that have consistently caught bass, several topping 10 pounds - all on top water flies. During one trip, the lodge manager says fly fishermen out-fished conventional top water anglers.

"Lake El Salto is in the Mexican state of Sinaloa, an hour and a half drive northeast of Mazatlan. The 24,000-acre flood control/irrigation



reservoir was built in 1983. The bass are pure Florida-strain largemouths with tilapia their main source of forage. There are daily direct jet flights to Mazatlan from Los Angeles, Houston, Phoenix and other cities.

"Lake Mateos, also in Sinaloa, is a 55,000-acre reservoir about an hour drive east of Culiacan. Mateos has been around for many years, but a drought from 1997 to 2002 left the lake at minimum pool. In 2003, the rains returned and since then the lake as been at full pool. Water inundated areas previously dry land, and bass grew rapidly in the nutrient-rich environment. Today, there is consistent fishing for two- to eight-pound bass and 50-plus fish days are common. The bass here are both northern and Florida-strain largemouths. In No-

vember 2007, Billy Chapman Jr. opened a new lodge on the lake. There are daily direct flights to Culiacan from Los Angeles.

"Fishing packages include airport transfers, accommodations, food, boats and guides and are \$2,015/person for four nights/three days fishing. The best fly fishing at both locations is from October to January and in April. Enjoy!"

■ Those direct flights I've been telling you about on **Vladivostok Airlines** from Anchorage, Alaska, to the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia finally took off last month but not without a hiccup. Seems the airline cancelled all of its Thursday flights, leaving a once-a-week schedule in place with departures on Monday. "We found that most anglers were flying on Mondays, and we decided to maximize bookings for those dates," Vladivostok Director of sales, Kenji Hanaoka, told *The Angling Report* near press time.

He said he had been told the change was causing few problems for anglers. Indeed, angling operators I talked to said the change was having little effect on their seasons, though one operator did say he had to re-route some clients through Seoul, South Korea. Hanaoka was quick to tell me that the reduction in flights is not indicative of bad things to come. He says the company plans to stay with the route and even expand its service next year in order to accommodate hunters who travel to Kamchatka earlier in the spring and later into October. I hope so, as the emergence of dependable air service between the West Coast and eastern Russia is crucial to the survival of the Kamchatka fishing program.

Here at *The Angling Report*, I'm anxious to hear back from anglers who go to Kamchatka this year, no matter how they get there. If you do fly Vladivostok, let me know how the service was. Write: [doncausey@msn.com](mailto:doncausey@msn.com)

■ A while back I told you we had