

## World's Largest Fly-Fishing-Only Preserve

Photo | John Sherman



► **The Rio Marié** is 500 miles of fly-fishing-only, catch-and-release for peacock bass.

**I**n 2014 a coalition of more than a dozen villages and indigenous native groups in the Rio Marié basin entered into a historic agreement with the Brazilian government to create the first fly-fishing-only, catch-and-release area in the Amazon River watershed. It's likely also the largest of its kind on the planet.

The seldom-seen Rio Marié and its tributaries represent more than 500 miles of river, and was earlier in the year identified by Brazilian government fisheries biologists as the most prolific trophy peacock bass fishery left in the Amazon.

It is the first time the Brazilian government has collaborated with indigenous groups to preserve a pristine fishing resource, and simultaneously protect a huge swath of rain forest, but they had a template. The company Untamed Angling worked with the Bolivian government on a similar project to protect the top golden dorado rivers in the area of Tsimane Lodge, and the company mirrored the concept in Brazil, but on a much larger scale.

Pat Pendergast, director of international travel at The Flyshop at Redding, California, said reports from the first season of exploratory fishing in the fall of 2014 were "mind boggling" with 40 peacocks over 20 pounds caught on fly tackle in seven weeks of fishing.

Photo | Matt Harris



► **A U.S. policy change** has opened Cuba's flats fishing to U.S. travelers, but there aren't enough qualified guides and boats to handle a large influx of fly fishers.

## Cuban Stampede

**I**n December President Barack Obama announced that his administration would move to normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba and significantly ease trade, finance, and travel restrictions between the two countries. The policy shift also changed the way U.S. fly fishers view Cuba's productive saltwater flats, which since 1959 have been officially off-limits to U.S. travelers, and fished by relatively few outsiders from mostly Canada and Europe.

"The moment this news was announced, our phones blew up," said Jim Klug of Yellowdog Fly Fishing Adventures in Bozeman, Montana. "We must have had more than 100 calls that first day. People are ready to fish Cuba, and they are chomping at the bit to go there. The reality, however, is that the infrastructure for guided fishing—legitimate, professional guided fishing—is only so large. Most spots are already booked for 2015, and quite a few for 2016."

Terry Johnson of Fish Tales Fly Shop in Calgary, Alberta, has led groups to Cuba for more than a decade and reports a similar experience. "The day of the announcement we had Americans calling up here, asking if they could join any of our trips for the 2015 season," said Johnson. Shortly after the announcement there were still no commercial flights from the U.S. to Cuba, but there are daily flights to Havana from Toronto and Calgary. ~

## Permit Work Earns BTT Award

**A**l Perkinson, vice president of marketing for Costa, was awarded the Lefty Kreh Sportsman of the Year Award at the recent International Bonefish and Tarpon Trust (BTT) Symposium in Dania Beach, Florida.

The selection committee picked Perkinson "because of his leadership, strategic direction, and dedication to Project Permit," an effort supported by Costa that successfully tagged more than 6,000 permit in Florida, Mexico, Belize, and the Bahamas over the course of the last five years.

"We wanted to make a difference, and we wanted it to matter in the end," said Perkinson upon receiving the award. "Project Permit is very much a grassroots efforts, calling on anglers and guides to tag permit and

retrieve tags for the BTT to analyze. We believed—and we still believe—in backing fisheries management procedures with true scientific data, and in mobilizing the angling community to help protect the fisheries we love."

Bernard "Lefty" Kreh was the first recipient of the award given every three years to a person who has shown leadership in the fishing industry toward conservation, innovation, promotion, and conservation of bonefish, tarpon, permit, and other coastal gamefish.

"Al has been instrumental in making Costa one of the top conservation supporters in the fishing industry," said Dr. Aaron Adams, director of operations for the BTT. "His vision and energy helped to get Project Permit



Photo | Pat Ford

► **Al Perkinson** (left) received the Lefty Kreh Sportsman of the Year Award from Dr. Aaron Adams, director of operations for the BTT.

started, and has been critical to keeping the program moving forward. Without Project Permit we would not have made the strides in permit conservation that we have so far."