



Chartreuse and white Clousers (centre) proved to be the most effective flies for angling around Kalakajour — both from the rocky outcrops on the shore and offshore — including for the sharp-toothed barracuda which should be handled with care.

MADAGASCAR

A unique flyfishing experience awaits on Kalakajour Island

KALAKAJOUR is a lovely island situated on the north-west coast of Madagascar. In November 2007 I was granted the opportunity to spend four days in the vicinity of the island, exploring both the shore-based and offshore angling possibilities of the region. Although I only had minimal time there, I was still excited about my brief taste of what can be expected with the fly. Below par weather conditions in the form of early rains prevailed during my stay, and I believe the fishing potential is far better than I experienced.

OFFSHORE ANGLING

The eastern shelf of the Moçambique Channel, dropping from 15 metres to more than a hundred metres in some places, is barely 5km from Kalakajour. Day after day we explored various areas along this dropoff, and by the third day, which was also our first sunny day, we managed to find a patch of brilliantly clear water — 15-16 metres visibility — on the edge of the drop which teemed with life and also proved to be the most

productive. Fishing along this shelf, we managed to land several species on fly which included eastern little tuna (kawakawa), bluefin kingfish, as well as reef fish such as emperors. Ignobilis were around both in the vicinity of the island and offshore, and although some were taken on lure by fellow anglers, sadly I never managed to hook one on fly. On our return from a day spent on the dropoff I hooked into a large fish some 200 metres from the camp. Several minutes later I landed a 40 lb great barracuda. The fish took a Mega Clouser on 30 lb fluorocarbon tippet (yes, I do consider myself lucky!) and put up a spectacular aerial display. With the dhow not being the ideal flyfishing platform, the release provided much entertainment for the rest of the anglers and the Malagasy boat crew.

Kingfish were also abundant in this area, and juvenile yellowtail kingfish eagerly snatched up chartreuse-and-white Clouser Minnows fished with a fast retrieve. Although the offshore angling was done off a dhow during my visit, a ski-boat facilitating all offshore

activities was due to be available from January 2008.

SHORE-BASED ANGLING

Much of my time was spent on a dhow, travelling between islands and searching for offshore reefs and dropoffs, but the little time I spent shore angling produced good numbers of fish.

A two-minute walk to the right of the camp brings one to a deep channel that runs along a shallow, rocky outcrop. Decent-sized kingfish patrol this channel during the pushing and dropping tide, and good fun can be had on a 9/10-wt outfit. Several similar looking rocky outcrops can be found all around the island, but I only managed to fish one of these. Here I landed several species, including a bluefin kingfish, several snapper and a longnosed emperor, in half-an-hour's fishing.

A prominent reef running out at a 90° angle from the south-west side of the island also looked very promising. This reef is lined with a fan-shaped turtle-grass flat on the northern side and a deep channel on the south where large



This beautiful kawakawa was just one of the species the author caught off Madagascar.

permit were seen whilst snorkelling. I think a return trip is necessary to find these fish on the turtle-grass flat during changing tides.

My trip also included a night's stay at Mahalina Beach on the mainland of Madagascar where I landed a lovely brassy kingfish, as well as several queenfish and snapper from a rocky point five minutes from the camp. A beautiful estuary runs along the back of this camp, and sightfishing for needlefish and snapper provides great excitement during the pushing tide.

TACKLE AND FLIES

For shore-based angling I would recommend a 10-wt and 6-wt outfit, both loaded with intermediate and floating

lines. The 6-wt is perfect for the many smaller species on the flats, which produce great fun on light tackle. The 10-wt would be suitable for targeting larger fish and for the casting distance needed in the channels and along the edges of the coral flats.

The flies I used for shore-based angling consisted mainly of chartreuse-and-white Clouser Minnows in sizes 2/0 and 4/0 — when your guides say “Chartreuse 'n white, chartreuse 'n white, chartreuse 'n white!” they really mean it. Smaller Charlies (sizes 2-10) in chartreuse, chartreuse-and-white, and pink-and-white also proved handy.

For offshore angling, a 12-wt loaded with a full length DI-7 sinking line would probably be most appropriate. This line is ideally suited for deeper areas (10-15m) and handles well in currents. A sinking tip with a running line would be fine for targeting fish in water shallower than 10m, but I would not recommend it for deeper water. The flies I fished successfully offshore consisted of Mega Clousers (size 6/0) and chartreuse-and-white Clouser Minnows in sizes 2/0-4/0. Make sure to stock up on flies, since large toothy fish quickly strip flies to bare hooks.

ACCOMMODATION AND ACTIVITIES

The resort, Turtle Bay Camp, on Kalakajour is still very rustic and currently consists of five A-frame bunga-

lows, each housing two single beds. They have been built in a clearing shaded by coconut palms, merely 20 metres off the beach. The island is fairly small, with a perimeter of approximately 8km, and a walk around the island during low tide is highly recommended.

The most beautiful shells are found along the sandy beaches, and lots of bird life and reptiles, such as the many geckos and chameleons, make for an interesting hike. Once the tide starts pushing over the flats, kayaks are available to explore the many channels that feed the flats with fish.

An eight-day package with Jenman Safaris includes accommodation, three meals per day, drinking water and boat trips — both fishing and travelling. Flights from Johannesburg to Antananarivo, and Antananarivo to Nosy Be are also included and recommended, since Air Madagascar provides very comfortable flights with plenty of legroom in economy class. For more information, Garth Jenman can be contacted on 082 333 3284, e-mail <madagascar@jenmansafaris.com>, or visit <www.travel2madagascar.com>.

Special thanks to fellow anglers Ryan Weaver and Louis for taking photographs of fly-caught fish on the dhow, and Philip Meyer for his advice on knots required for large saltwater species. 