

Chasing Childhood DREAMS

PART 3

IGFA
World Record!

HARDY
ALNWICK | ENGLAND

The passing weeks seemed like months, time was spent researching and testing out some new flies. But the day did come and I was back to Thailand with another group of customers and this time we had two days back at the predator lake.

On arrival the guides took care of the customers, setting up lure rods and demonstrating the best methods of working the lures. My mind was on just one thing and I could just not set up my fly rod quick enough. The plan was as before my Hardy Zane 10# rod and reel, floating line with a salmon fast sink tip.

Walking to the first corner which was where my dreams had previously been shattered, I gained a sense of deja vue, for I swear that in exactly the same place as before, a beautiful Redtail Catfish rolled right in front of me. Surely this time luck would be on my side. Twenty odd casts later worked though the swim and not as much as a sniff and what was worse; there were no more signs of any fish. In fact the lake seemed so much quieter than before. It was then that my mind realised what I had missed in haste to start fishing. While I was back in the UK it had rained hard in Thailand, resulting in muddy coloured water. Continuing to fish with a sinking feeling, many questions raced through my mind. With this much colour how would the fish see the fly? It would have to be so close to a fish, it could detect the movement of the fly through the water. But with 10 acres of muddy water, blind casting was



The veranda which almost cost me the record

going to be hard work, not a thought I relished. As quick as my spirits were fading they lifted, "Was that a pluck?" As before I paused and this time felt a fish suck in my fly. As the line tightened I pulled the line hard with my left hand. This was not to the fishes liking for it took off at an alarming rate. All I could do was hold on and watch my reel do it's Hardy dance. At around 60 metres, out the fish surfaced briefly, but long enough for its yellow underbelly and red fins to light up in the morning sun. "It's a Redtail," I shouted, "Yes buddy but try and keep it on this time," my bald friend Jean-Francois Helias cried. On diving back in to the depths, the fish turned and ran straight towards me, which with a larger arbour fly reel and a one to one ratio had me reeling like a man obsessed. But I was that man, for I had never wanted to get a fish in so quickly and so badly before in my life. However, this fish had no intention of making things that easy for me. In fact as it got closer and closer it made an unbelievable run to my left. The problem was that to my left the lake did a 90° turn and that was where the lakes refreshment and seating area was. Running along the bank, as I came to the seating area, I had to work my rod around the veranda pillars, while at the same time squeeze through myself without falling in and ending my dreams once more." Was this fish ever going to stop? I could not do anything with it, was I playing it too cautiously or please don't say I had fouled hooked it."

Forty minutes after first hooking the fish and over 300 metres away from where it was hooked, the



The moment I dreamed of

fish was wallowing in the margins. Now I do not know who the most nervous was, considering the outcome of the situation last time, me or Noi my guide who had the net in his hand. I lifted the fish's head and with out hesitation Noi slipped the net under the fish and raised it up with a huge cheer, which was only deafened by my heartbeat. I could feel my chest heaving with each deep breath and the adrenaline pumping around my body, which is the best fix in the world, as any angler will tell you

Quickly Jean-Francois and his team gathered all the necessary tools, certified scales, sling, tape measures, camera, while Dave Haverson set up our film equipment. Once ready it was time to lift out my prize for the first time. Lying in the net on the soft grass, I removed the fly which was well back in the mouth. Apart from that I was pretty useless, for my mind was in a dream admiring my hard earned prize. I just stood back and watched, as the fish was lifted on to the scales, "4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 9.4, 9.8, 9.87" called Francois, "Well done buddy! It's a 20lb class tippet record." Wow 35 years of chasing and achieving childhood dreams and here I was after just achieving my ultimate dream and we still had the majority of the first day left." We need to take off the leader and one inch of the fly line to submit with the record," announced Jean-Francois Helias, "Put on a new line and a 12IB leader this time buddy and let's see if we can smash another one!" But that's another story.

Peter Collingsworth



The only way they could gag my excitement

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