

*the*

# HURDLES

# WE Overcome

by KEVIN JARNAGIN

When I was younger I never had any visions outside of fishing anything but my small world of lakes and ponds. However, when you grow up most things change and hurdles arise. It is how you face those hurdles that define the outcome and your outlook. Billy Chapman Jr. approached me about putting together a group of some of the most talented anglers in the world to go fish the Amazon. All of a sudden, I started thinking bigger – WAY BIGGER.

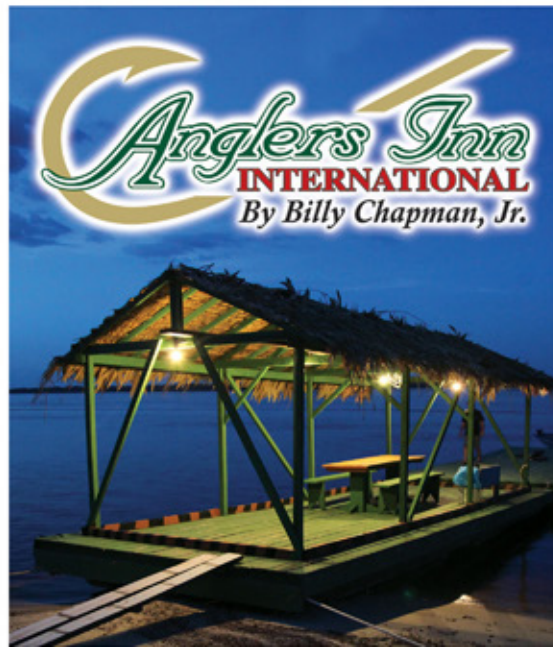
I hate to say that I was that guy on the trip, but I was. In true form, I spent hours tirelessly packing and planning. If you've ever visited one of Billy Chapman Jr.'s establishments then you know everything is already finished. He plans so meticulously that all you have to do is show up and fish.

There is no one on this planet more in tune with how an operation should be run than Billy Chapman Jr. He cut his outfitting teeth in the wilds of the Amazon. So selecting him to be our outfit-

ter was a no brainer. Out in the middle of nowhere seems like a big obstacle to overcome, but Rio Negro Lodge operated by Anglers Inn is nothing short of breathtaking. It was heaven on Earth for our entire crew.

If you travel abroad you probably research the website and glass over the pictures and book. You are trusting those pictures are an accurate depiction of what you will see once you arrive. I am living proof that the pictures on website aren't entirely accurate. It is far better in person that what you could cruise online.

The service is exactly what you've come to expect from Billy Chapman Jr. and at times you forget you're a world away. The lodge becomes a home. The friendly faces, ridiculously good food and non-stop wildlife around makes you really appreciate the fact that somebody saw the beauty of the spot where Rio Negro Lodge rests.

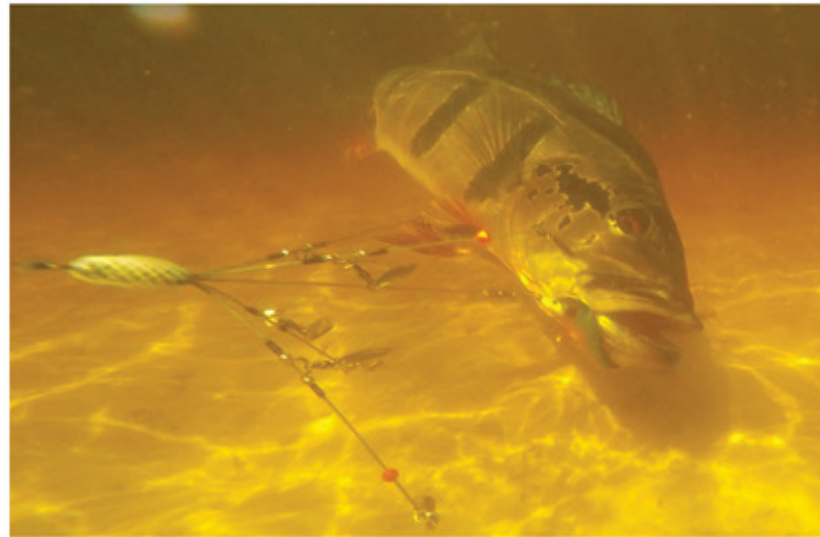




That was my first hurdle I overcame. With my mind at ease, I was able to realize that the dream I had as a young boy had grown into something much larger than just bassing my way through life in the States. I was in comfort at Rio Negro Lodge operated by Anglers Inn and there was nothing I wanted more at that time than hoisting one of those large peacock bass above my head.

My second hurdle came in the form of countless blades spinning around a single head. The umbrella rig isn't really something I like throwing. It just doesn't fit my style of fishing, and I was bound and determined to catch my largest peacock on the big fish producing Woodchopper. It didn't take me long to realize my skinny arms were not in shape for 10 hours of chopping.

The Hog Farmer umbrella rig made for this trip was highlighted by a dozen or so spinner blades and a single trailer hook springing out the back of the rig. When tuned properly these can be killer, but still it isn't my style. Our guide Eddie and another guide hacked their way into this gorgeous looking backwater area of the Rio Negro. Fish were exploding all around and we presented our offerings – nothing. They were no more interested in our choppers, jigs, crankbaits and topwater plugs than I was in returning to the lodge empty handed.





RIO NEGRO LODGE  
By Anglers Inn International

This is the moment that the second hurdle went down. I picked up the Hog Farmer and it produced my biggest peacock of the trip on the third cast. Needless to say, when I saw dark tannic water the Hog Farmer was the first bait I threw.



The final hurdle for me was the health concerns most people have with traveling overseas. It was hard not to listen to reports of viruses that you could catch, but Billy was reassuring and let us know we didn't have any worries. He went on to explain that we had just as good of chance of catching something here in the States than we did down in Brazil. Still, I packed copious amounts of the most potent bug goo known to man.

When I arrived I applied said bug goo, but nobody else applied. I thought this was odd since I brought plenty. They did something that I should have done. They listened to their outfitter. That was the last time I applied anything other than sunscreen on this skin.



From the time the small band of anglers arrived in Manaus till the time we left the beautiful Rio Negro Lodge, we never saw a single mosquito. I thought I'd arrive to swarms of fist-sized biters ready to carry me off, but we never saw a thing. Billy explained that the water in the Rio Negro isn't conducive for these critters to produce so they multiply elsewhere.

Growing up is tough. Overcoming your own hurdles is easy when you have a place as good as Rio Negro Lodge just a phone call away. I will be back without hesitation because the grown up me knows there are people like Billy Chapman Jr. out there taking care of every detail, allowing me the freedom to simply enjoy myself.



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THE ADVENTURER

# BATTLING THE AMAZON

WHEREIN THE AUTHOR STEAMS UP THE RIO NEGRO TO TAKE  
ON THE WORLD'S MEANEST MENAGERIE OF FRESHWATER FISH

BY JOHN B. SNOW

**T**he jungle pressed hard against the banks of the river. Viewed from a distance, it was a wall of undifferentiated green with no breaks in the foliage. Up close, I could make out individual trees. They all rose to a uniform height as if kept in check by a divine hedge clipper. You rarely saw a tree that managed to outgrow the others by more than a foot or two as they fought each other for sunlight.

The trees had a band of discoloration about 25 or 30 feet up their trunks, indicating the river's high-water mark during the rainy season. This was mind-boggling, given that at its current "low" levels, the river I was steaming up dwarfed the Mississippi many times over.

The Rio Negro is a tributary of the Amazon, joining with it at Manaus, a sprawling city of 1.8 million that draws indigenous people from the

surrounding rain forest to its ramshackle apartments and dirty streets in search of work.

The jungle around it was the most unforgiving environment I've ever encountered. Any perceived vulnerability was pounced on without mercy.

After chugging more than 300 miles up the Rio Negro, and going past the small town of Barcellos, I witnessed this ferocity daily while I fished in hopes of landing a mega-size peacock bass.

I saw it the first day when a broad-winged raptor with bright-red bands on its tail swooped down onto my 6-inch topwater bait and tried to fly off with it clutched in its talons. Or when freshwater dolphins would lurk under our small bass boat and ambush the peacock bass we'd release over the side. Sometimes the dolphins wouldn't wait that long and they'd chase the bass as they were reeled in. If they grabbed hold, a tug-of-war would ensue while I tried to

tear the fish free by yanking on my heavy baitcasting rod and hoping the 85-pound braid held.

My lures were even attacked from land. Casting along the bank one day, I snagged a small log. As I jiggled the chopper to get it free, a large lizard sprinted out of the underbrush and jumped on the log to pounce. It took it half a second to realize the lure wasn't a meal and it vanished as rapidly as it had appeared.

The fishing was ferocious. There wasn't anything that grabbed onto the baits that didn't fight like hell. Mid-size bass from 5 to 7 pounds had no trouble doubling my rod over and pulling off long lengths of line with every surge. The smaller bass came more readily to the boat, but even they had enough fight that you'd never consider lipping them for a trophy shot if you value the flesh on your thumb.

And then there were the

big fish. Sometimes as they zeroed in on the baits, they would throw a wake like a surfacing submarine. Other times they would come up from below and the water would erupt like a geyser. In either case the guide would yell, "Set the hook! Set the hook!" in broken English while I hauled back on the rod.

My enthusiastic hooksets nearly cost me dearly. I was throwing a chopper along the bank, ripping down hard on the rod with every crank of the reel to make the metal propeller at the rear of the bait spin and throw water with the distinctive bee swarm zzzzz sound, when a huge fish boiled up from below and swallowed the 8-inch lure. I ripped back hard to set the hook and the rod



**X** The Amazon is home to several subspecies of peacock bass, including the paca, pictured here.



**X** The Amazon contains the earth's most diverse collection of freshwater fishes.

optimism among the anglers in our group.

Chapman recruits his guides from the indigenous people who call the jungle home. Navigating the twisting maze of braided water and lagoons, which left me instantly disoriented, was second nature to them.

My guides put me not only on peacock bass, but on piranha, freshwater barracuda, and dogfish, which are primitive aquatic nightmares that hit topwaters with a degree of savagery exceptional even in these croc-infested waters.

shattered in three pieces, leaving me with a cork-handled graphite stump.

The fish took off down the bank and stripped line from my reel as I looked helplessly at my broken gear. But the line and the hooks held. After a couple of minutes its surges no longer outdistanced the line I was able to recover, and I gained ground. Eventually, I got it alongside and we managed to guide it into the net and haul it aboard. The rod was a worthwhile sacrifice for a 20-pound peacock. Its maw was so large that my 8-inch lure had disappeared from sight.

I fished a total of seven days, the first two based off a giant yacht that served as a mothership to the string of bass boats it towed upriver, and the last five out of a lodge. These venues were as luxurious as the jungle was harsh, and they gave me a chance to recoup each night before heading back out to fish at dawn the next day. Both operations—known officially as the *Angler's Inn Amazon* (the boat) and the *Rio Negro Lodge* by *Angler's Inn* (the lodge)—are run by Billy Chapman Jr., a well-known figure in the international fishing scene ([anglersinn.com](http://anglersinn.com)). Chapman's knack for hospitality and showmanship, coupled with his high-energy persona, created an aura of infectious



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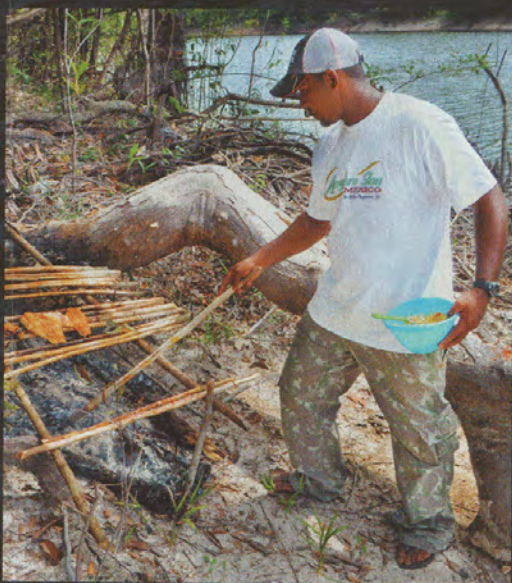
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# The Brazil Boys

By DAVE PRECHT  
Editor In Chief

(From top) The author's near-record butterfly weighed 12 pounds; prop baits, jerkbaits and SubWalks took lots of abuse; a float plane lands in a rare, straight stretch of the Jufari; Joshua Cruz tends the fire from a delicious shore lunch. (Right) Native guide Jardel battles a tailwalking peacock bass. Photos: Dave Precht and Hobson Bryan



A person wearing a tan long-sleeved shirt, a tan baseball cap, and a tan hooded sweatshirt is sitting on a boat, fishing. The person is holding a fishing rod that is bent, indicating a catch. The boat is on a river or lake, surrounded by dense green forest. The sky is blue with some clouds. The person is wearing a tan long-sleeved shirt, a tan baseball cap, and a tan hooded sweatshirt. The boat is on a river or lake, surrounded by dense green forest. The sky is blue with some clouds.

If heaven has fishing, surely its rivers are filled  
with peacock bass

**THE AMAZON JUNGLE** is a forbidding, dangerous place. Since the first Europeans landed on the shores of South America 500 years ago, thousands of adventurers have entered the gigantic rain forest and were never seen again. After explorer Percy Fawcett disappeared, along with his son and a friend, in 1925 during the last of his attempts to find El Dorado, the city of gold, more than 100 people perished trying to find the men.

They died at the hands of unfriendly tribes of native South Americans, or from disease, insects, drowning or starvation.

Starvation? If only they had packed some red-and-yellow bucktail jigs and some 7-inch Woodchoppers, they'd have had plenty to eat, I thought, as my guide, Ney, unhooked yet another chunky peacock bass. He whacked it over the head with a pair of pliers and stowed it under the back bench of our aluminum fishing boat. The fish would make another appearance that evening at dinner, fileted, sprinkled with a wonderful Brazilian seasoning mix and grilled over a fire pit.

After reading about explorers who emerged from the jungle emaciated, I felt guilty for having gained a few pounds during my seven days on the upper Jufari River, a tributary of the Rio Negro. And while early adventurers had to sleep fully clothed and shrouded in mosquito netting to endure insect swarms, my friends and I slept blissfully in our air-conditioned floating "suites" each evening.

*(Continued)*



Jack Odle (top) and Jim Copeland enjoy a shore lunch and a siesta during a midday break.

Photos: Dave Precht

## The Brazil Boys

But the food and accommodations weren't the reasons I had traveled more than 3,000 miles to the center of the Amazon region. Like hundreds of other bass anglers from the United States who fly to Manaus, Brazil, each dry season, I had come to catch the giant, powerful peacock bass.

They're not really bass — they're actually members of the cichlid family — but they bite like bass, and they fight like bass ... on steroids.

It was the trip of a lifetime for me, fulfillment of a long-held dream, No. 1 on my bucket list of fishing experiences. And it did not disappoint.

Like most great fishing trips, the last day was the best day, so I'll begin there.

My partner that day was Dr. Hobson Bryan, a professor at the University of Alabama, who in his spare time competed in exactly 100 Bassmaster tournaments. Our party of four pairs of anglers drew names to see which guides we'd go out with that last day, and we won the lottery with Jardel, who had guided Bryan to a 21 1/2-pound peacock a few days earlier.

All the guides were good, but Jardel seemed to have the fish dialed in that week. He took us to a small pocket off the main river, a cove no more than 25 acres in size and averaging about 3 feet deep. If you stood on the casting deck, you could see lighter colored areas, roughly the size of truck tires, beneath the tannin-stained water. These were our targets.

"These fish are bedding!" Bryan said. "I've been saying all week these peacocks seem to be spawning, and no one believed me." Seeing was believing for me. We had only to get a lure near one of the white circles to get an explosive strike.

While most of our party had spent the week performing the arm-wrenching ripping retrieve required by Woodchoppers, Bryan had taken outfitter Billy Chapman Jr.'s advice and tied on a Rapala X-Rap SubWalk. After catching the 21 1/2 on the bait, he saw no need to wear himself out with the 'chopper. Nor did I.

We started off with 5- and 6-pounders. Then a much bigger peacock engulfed the plug and headed for a wad of roots and vines. It pulled off, straightening some of the hooks. We paused to replace the stock trebles with heavy-duty versions and went back to work. (The heavier hooks actually seemed to improve the performance of the baits. The peacocks thought so, at least.)

The money technique involved working the SubWalk from side-to-side with the same rod-twitching, reel-turning motion that makes a Zara Spook walk the dog on the surface. Spooks caught plenty of peacocks for us that week, but the underwater walking bait did even better.

What I missed in doing that, though, were the explosive strikes on Woodchoppers and other surface baits. Several times, 10-plus-pound peacock bass hit so hard, they knocked the heavy plugs head-high into the air. If you ripped it just right when it returned to the water, they'd bat it again, and again, before hooking up. It's a sensation bass fanatics can almost imagine, and one they should hope to experience.

Jimmy Yarbrough, a B.A.S.S. Nation member and the most intense fisherman in our party — he caught 40 fish heavier than 10 pounds in 6 1/2 days — compares the disposition of a spawning peacock to "Mike Tyson on a bad day."

After hooking an 18-pounder on a Woodchopper, he said, "It was all I could do to hold on as the fish ripped off yards of line in a powerful surge that has to be experienced to be fully appreciated." With 65-pound braided Spiderwire, you have to keep drags relatively light and accept the risk of a fish making it into the trees. Fish smaller than 18 pounds have the ability to straighten saltwater hooks, pull trebles out of the baits and straighten split rings.

The peacocks didn't miss the subsurface baits very often, but they compensated for their low-key strikes with acrobatics once they felt steel. Most 10-pound largemouth bass just



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wallow on the surface, but an 18-pound peacock will turn cartwheels trying to shed the hooks.

By noon, that small cove had given up 11 fish weighing more than 10 pounds, along with dozens of smaller ones. We kept track of the weights: four 12s, a 13, a 14, two 16s, a 17, an 18 and one almost 19 pounds. Almost all of those fish were pacas, or peacock tucunare, as they're known in Brazil. These peacocks average around 6 to 7 pounds, and anything heavier than 12 is bragging size. A 20-pounder turns heads, and the current world record is 29-1. The other species is the butterfly tucunare, and most of them are small, although no less beautiful.

When Jardel netted a big butterfly peacock I had hooked, his eyes grew wide. He put it on the Boga-Grip. "Twelve pounds," he announced. "I've never seen one over 11!" Indeed, the IGFA all-tackle record weighed 12-9. I didn't realize the significance of the catch until I had returned to the States.

I'm bragging about the fish and the fishery here, by the way, not the fishermen. And to put it in perspective, our first five and a half days were somewhat less productive. During the week, our group of eight boated close to 1,000 peacock bass, according to the guides' very conservative count. It sure seemed like more. Including the numerous other species — dogfish, monkey fish, piranha and others — it was.

### Interesting Facts About The Amazon

- The Amazon River is the second-longest river in the world, behind the Nile, and carries more water than the next seven largest rivers combined.
- The Amazon Basin is the largest river basin in the world, draining 40 percent of South America. It is responsible for 20 percent of all freshwater entering the world's oceans.
- More than a third of all species in the world live in the Amazon rain forest, including more than 2,000 species of fish.
- Manaus is a city of 2.2 million people situated on the Rio Negro and is virtually an island. Only two roads connect it to the rest of Brazil, and one of them requires a ferry crossing. Travel to the interior is by float plane or riverboat.

Companions Don Logan and Jim Copeland, co-owners of B.A.S.S., had fished the Amazon previously, as had Bryan. All three agreed that the fishing was better during our trip last January than they had ever experienced. Other members of our party — Tom Curl of Milwaukee, Jack Odle of Birmingham and Bruce Akin, CEO of B.A.S.S. — also called it the trip of a lifetime.

(Continued)

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Hobson Bryan's big peacock bass put on an aerial show. (Inset) Bruce Akin holds a heavy paca peacock bass.  
Photos: Dave Precht

Much of the credit for that great fishing action goes to the flexibility of the "floating suites" Chapman uses in his Anglers Inn Amazon. Chapman is well-known for his Anglers Inn Lodge and bass fishing operation on Mexico's Lake El Salto, but not many realize he was one of the pioneers of peacock bass fishing in the Amazon decades ago.

Fishing pressure is much greater in the Amazon region than it was when he first took customers fishing there, he says. The floating suites — think motel rooms on pontoons — make it possible to find fishing areas with minimal pressure.

Every one or two days during our trip, Chapman's crew would push the six cabins (four for customers, one for him and his lodge manager, Joshua Cruz, and a dining hall) off the beach, lash them together and tow them upriver. Consequently, we were often fishing virgin waters and gawking at new scenery.

Also, the suites and the tow boat were shallow-running enough to go far upstream to where the water levels were low and the fish were concentrated in accessible areas, such as river bars, coves and bays. The typical riverboat used in most peacock expeditions can't navigate shallow stretches and usually is confined to major rivers such as the Rio Negro.

Having the suites nearby also made it possible to enjoy a siesta in an air-conditioned cabin during the heat of the day. We skipped that option after realizing

that midday produced some of the better fishing. Instead, we paused at noon for a shore lunch of grilled fish or a sandwich and maybe a short snooze in a hammock.

On really hot days, we went swimming among the piranhas, stingrays and cayman. I learned that movie accounts of piranhas stripping every bit of flesh off a victim's bones are mostly fictional. The children in camp were catching piranhas with hand lines off the beach where our cabins were tied up, and they thought nothing of swimming among the fish.

Our routine each evening after returning from fishing was to grab a plastic chair, sit in the water behind our cabins, enjoy a refreshing drink or two and relive the day's excitement. I quickly got over the fear of being eaten alive — although I made sure I wasn't the first in the water.

If you're not a Bassmaster Elite Series professional, you'll likely find that 6 1/2 days of hard fishing in 90-degree temperatures is grueling. Your arms are sore from casting and fighting dozens of belligerent fish, and your fingers are blistered and raw. But that final evening, as we unwound in the chest-high waters of the Jufari, we all dreaded the thought of leaving. Almost every one of us said we'd gladly stay another week, if that were possible. Some in our party have already scheduled a return trip for the same dates next January.

One trip of a lifetime, as it turns out, is not enough.



## Amazon Trip Notes

All the information you need about fishing the rivers of Brazil is available on the Internet, especially at [www.anglersinn.com](http://www.anglersinn.com); 800-468-2347. Here are a few additional notes on what to expect, as well as pointers for making your trip memorable.

**What To Take** — You can pack all you need in carry-on luggage: three changes of clothes (laundry service is available), a rainsuit, camera, toiletries and the like.

Binoculars and a pocket guide to wildlife in the Amazon will be helpful in identifying the parrots, macaws, otters and other fascinating creatures you'll see.

**Tackle** — Anglers Inn provides all the tackle and lures you'll need, including sturdy Abu Garcia rods and Revo reels spooled with 50- or 65-pound braided Spiderwire. If you must take your own gear, select medium-heavy and heavy rods with fast tips.

**Necessaries** — Billy Chapman supplies a waterproof "Amazon Tough Bag" filled with dozens of items you'll be glad to have handy. If you're not booking a trip with him, note the list of items on his website.

**Accommodations** — The mobile suites are surprisingly comfortable, offering two beds, a desk area, hot shower, toilet, air conditioning, electricity and a deck on the stern to relax and watch the river flow by.

**Food** — The Brazilian way is to offer a buffet of choices. We had fish at every meal (including breakfast!), along with a variety of other meats, vegetables, fruits and desserts.

**Cautions** — Because the Jufari is one of the "black rivers," meaning it's tannic, insects weren't much of a bother. I saw one mosquito the entire week. Trips to other rivers might require insect repellent to guard against gnats, mosquitoes and other pests. Sunburn is a real threat in any equatorial region. Wear high-SPF sunscreen, long-sleeve shirts, wide-brim hats and coverings for the neck, face and hands. Rainstorms are always a threat in the Amazon rainforest; we were fortunate that it only sprinkled once, for five minutes.

**Getting There** — Most travelers fly from Miami to Manaus and then board a float plane for a two-hour flight to their destination river. Flight

schedules may require 20 hours of travel time, including layovers, so it's wise to arrive in Manaus a day early and get plenty of sleep.

**Recommended Reading** — Two books enthralled me about the Amazon: *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* and *The Lost City of Z, A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*.

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## Reflecting on the Rainforest

### Amazon fishing adventure deals out diary of fond memories

BY MATT WILLIAMS Outdoors Writer



Ebb Flynt of Nacogdoches hoists a beautiful "three bar" peacock bass caught from a remote backwater lagoon flanking the Omero River. Moments earlier, a jaguar could be heard in the dense jungle backdrop.

Photo by Matt Williams

**THE OMEMO RIVER, BRAZIL**— I've been here for 6 1/2 days — more than 3,000 miles from Texas soil and far from civilization - doing things and seeing stuff that make this place truly unique from any other corner of the world.

I've dined with crocodiles. Swam with piranhas. Fished with jaguars and caught peacock bass until my arms hurt. On more than one occasion I have napped in the cool shade offered by the dense canopy of a towering rainforest that is believed to be the oldest on Earth, possibly as much as 100 million years old.

I've seen monkeys scampering about the treetops, pink dolphins roiling the shallows, romps of giant river otters basking in the sun and all sorts of strange looking insects and fish that I could not identify.

To call this country wild and vastly unspoiled would be an understatement. This is the

real deal. When you are here, you are in the midst of all that is the jungle.

There are humans in these woods who have never brushed with the outside world and animals out there that would eat you given half the chance. The river before me is a piscatorial jungle in itself, teeming with toothy predators that gravitate to the sounds of the helpless and race to the metallic scent of blood.

It's spooky to think about, but my gut feeling is any attempt by a flatlander to get out of here on foot would be a death wish. I'm not worried about that, though. Tim Boatman, Ebb Flynt and I are about to board a small boat that will shuffle us 40 miles down the Branco River to a dirt airstrip at the outskirts of a remote Brazilian village. There, we will hop on a charter plane and begin a rigorous two-day jour-

ney back to the real world as we know it.

Just thinking about all that has taken place here over the past week throws my journalist juices into a frothy mix bubbling with so much material that it is tough to divide the sugar from the candy.

My friends and I came here to fish, but our expedition hosted by Anglers Inn International founder, Billy Chapman Jr., turned into way much more than that. What follows is a diary of events that transpired during an Amazon adventure that neither of us will soon forget:

#### The Anglers Inn Way

Chapman is well respected throughout the sport fishing industry as an outfitter who stands behind his word, pays close attention to detail and goes the extra mile when it comes to customer care and

service. He admits he is not the cheapest game in town, but he doesn't want to be.

"I'm not interested in being cheap," Chapman chuckled. "It's not the Anglers Inn Way."

I have visited Chapman's lakeside bass fishing lodges in Mexico several times and have always been impressed by the extraordinary quality of service his staff provides. Customers are treated as royalty from daylight to dark. If you want something, just ask and it will be delivered to your doorstep.

Sometimes you don't even have to ask. To wit:

Two weeks before leaving for the Amazon, a UPS truck delivered a nifty dry boat bag to each of our homes, courtesy of Anglers Inn Amazon. Inside the bag were fishing gloves, insect repellent, aspirins, a first aid kit, antiseptics and a host of other essentials you can't find in the jungle.



Photo by Matt Williams

Anglers Inn founder Billy Chapman Jr., displays a black piranha that mistook his Yozuri jerk bait for an easy meal.

I must admit, during the planning stages of our trip I was curious as to whether Chapman would be able to deliver his trademark service to a mobile lodging facility positioned in the middle of the largest, most remote rainforest in the universe. I shouldn't have been.

The accommodations are top shelf and the staff is among the most friendly and helpful that I have ever fished with. Rooms are tended and clothes washed/folded daily, while tasty buffet style meals and desserts are served up fresh each day.

The fishing guides — Tigre, Cracker, Smiley and Pepe — are top notch, as well. Not only are they experts at tying knots and running boats, they are extremely knowledgeable about peacock bass behavior and reading the water. Boatman labeled his guide, Tigre, a magician when it comes to freeing stuck lures from the brush.

### Fishing with jaguars

The sights and sounds of the rainforest are many, but none will grab your attention like the wicked call of a jaguar. It is a deep, chesty roar that sounds more like a repetitive cough than a growl. Chapman, who helped pioneer the peacock bass fishing revolution in the 1980s, has had a handful of rare encounters with the big cats over years.

"There is nothing in the jungle that sounds like it," he said. "When you hear one, it's either coming to fight or looking for a mate. The jaguar is the top of the food chain out here. One

bite to the head and it's over."

Flynt and I were reminded of those words one afternoon as we snatched peacock bass one after another from a fallen tree at the edge of a remote backwater lagoon. Tigre was the first to detect the muffled sounds of a big cat.

"Shhhh ... jaguar," the guide said, motioning towards the dense jungle on the opposite side of the lake.

For the next five minutes we listened intently as the raspy rumble grew louder and much more defined. Then, almost as if someone flicked a light switch, the eerie screams ended as mysteriously as they had begun.

### Dining with crocs

Caiman crocodiles are frequently seen in the Amazon Basin, especially along the more remote tributaries, sloughs and drainages that feed the larger river systems. We witnessed countless black caimans during our week-long stay on the Rio Omero, a small tributary that flows for about 200 miles and is roughly the width of the Trinity River in places.

Interestingly, several of the crocs became extremely curious when Chapman's staff relocated the mobile camp from its original location to an isolated beach several miles upriver.

Within minutes of our arrival, there were several crocs cruising the open bay in front of the camp. I counted as many as five at one time, including a couple of 10-11 footers that ventured as close as 10 feet from the dining room suite as

we enjoyed drinks and dinner inside each evening.

### Wolf pack peacocks and toothy stuff

The Omero River has kicked out a handful of "teener" peacocks up to 18 pounds this season, but it has been most reliable for quality fish in the 4 to 13-pound range and some very tall numbers.

In six days, our group of four anglers caught and released 1,155 peacocks to nearly 13 pounds. Tack on all the monkey fish, dog fish, payaras, piranhas and arowanas that grabbed our baits we easily reeled in 1,500 fish.

While everyone witnessed an occasional lull, there were times when the bite was non-stop. Flynt and I stumbled across multiple wolf packs one afternoon and ended the day with nearly 150 peacocks, including several 10 pounders. It wasn't uncommon to cast to a lay down log that appeared void of life, then have 10-15 fish attack the bait like a swarm of bees.

We caught peacocks on assorted lures, but a 1/2 ounce buck tail jig was the most consistent producer overall. The key was making accurate casts tight to underwater sandbars or fallen trees, then retrieving the jig quickly with intermittent twitches to give it an erratic action.

The downside to the jig is it can be costly to throw. Piranhas will whittle the five-inch buck tail to the nub in no time. Guides charge \$6 apiece for retying spent jigs. Flynt ran up a \$150 jig tab all on his own.

### Swimming with piranhas

We've all heard tales of the man-eating piranhas of the Amazon and how they will strip a human's flesh to the bone in a matter of seconds if given the chance.

Chapman doesn't worry about it much.

The 55-year-old outfitter from New Jersey took a refreshing dip in the 75-degree Omero just about every afternoon and he encouraged us to follow suit. It took some coaxing, but Chapman's persuasive personality finally won out.

"The main thing you need to worry about around here are the freshwater stingrays," he said. "Just shuffle your feet across the bottom when you walk, just like when you are wade fishing in saltwater and you'll be alright."

Many experts say the fish are timid scavengers and that danger to humans is minimal on larger river systems, especially during periods of median or high water when food is plentiful. However, piranhas can be dangerous when falling water traps them in small backwater lakes or lagoons. These fish will quickly deplete existing food supplies and begin to starve.

In the wild piranhas typically feed on dead, dying or injured animals and fish. They are lured by the scent of blood and sometimes provoked by frantic movements beneath surface.

Perhaps that explains the mangled tail on the 12 3/4 pound male peacock I caught one morning. The fish stripped drag multiple times before I finally worked it to the landing net. That's when we discovered several fresh wounds about its tail and body.

"Piranhas," Chapman said pointing to the bloody tail. "They were working him over on the way in."

Only in the Amazon. I can't wait until I go back!

Matt Williams is a free-lance writer based in Nacogdoches. He can be reached by e-mail, mattwilliams@netdot.com

For more information on booking a trip to the Amazon, go to [www.anglersinn.com](http://www.anglersinn.com), [www.anglersinn.tv](http://www.anglersinn.tv) or call 1-800 -GOTA-FISH (1-800-468-2347).



## Amazon tough

Chapman's mobile suites take adventuresome anglers to the peacock's lair

BY MATT WILLIAMS Outdoors Writer



Anglers Inn International founder Billy Chapman Jr. played a key role in putting five-star peacock bass fishing on the map in the 1980's. He has since become an icon in the sport fishing industry, largely because his knack for finding out-of-the-way places to fish and offering his clients unparalleled service once they get there.

Roughly two weeks have passed since Ebb Flynt, Tim Boatman and myself returned to East Texas on the heels of a 10-day adventure that took us deep into the heart of Amazon Rainforest of South America. I'm not sure how my friends are feeling these days, but I'm still dealing with a serious hangover that has to rank among the worst of my life.

Trust me when I say my cloudy mind and aching body have nothing to do with the tasty margaritas or Brazilian beers served up daily by Billy Chapman's Anglers Inn staff. The peacocks did it. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Six days spent battling more than 1,155 of the colorful prize fighters amid one of the world's most unforgiving environments is almost more fun than any man can stand. Anyone who has been there and caught fish like we did will surely agree.

Peacock bass fishing is labor intensive recreation that sometimes results in a host of nagging side effects. Not only does it wear on you physically, it eats at you mentally and makes more common sport fishing quests hardly seem like a challenge anymore. Worse yet, it will stain your fishing soul so deeply that time can't wash the memories away.

I made my first trip to the Amazon in 2004 and I've been dreaming about going back ever since. Chapman made the dream a reality in mid January when he guided my friends and I on a lifetime fishing expedition played out along the Rio Omero, a winding, twisting, watery stage located more than 250 miles into the interior of one of the wildest natural wonders found anywhere on the planet.

Chapman, 55, is a globe-trotting outfitter from New Jersey who lives to have fun

and make money doing it. He is largely responsible for putting peacock bass fishing on the map in the 1980s, when he set-up camp on rivers all over Brazil and built lodges in southern Venezuela - all in the name of finding the best spots to turn anglers on to tucunaré — a bruiser-of-a-fish known for striking with the force of a freight train, fighting with tenacity of a bulldog, destroying the best tackle money can buy and crushing even the tallest of egos.

To hear Chapman tell it, finding virgin water and unmolested fish was easy when he first started, but that is hardly the case anymore.

The interest in catching heavyweight peacocks has increased significantly during the past 20 years and numerous outfitters have set-up shop across the region to grab a piece of the pie. This sometimes results in several boats

competing for the same water found in close proximity to the more heavily populated hubs, where many of the large outfits do business. Therein lies the beauty of the newest addition to Chapman's long list of successful business ventures — the Anglers Inn Floating Mobile Suites. I was the first journalist to visit the new camp and it came as no surprise to learn that it is everything Chapman cracked it up to be. I'd be lying if I said the outfit was comparable to the Statler Hilton. In my book, it's better.

Adventuresome anglers who prefer to go first-class will love this place, largely because it offers just about everything to keep a man or woman comfortable — including room service — without sacrificing the many sights, sounds and smells that define the true Amazon jungle fishing experience.



The Anglers Inn Floating Mobile Suites at rest on a white sand beach flanking the Rio Omero. The mobile suites provide clients with many of the creature comforts of home and exclusive access to unmolested fishing waters.



The Amazon Basin is a wild and watery stage comprised of dozens of free flowing rivers and tributaries and literally thousands of isolated lagoons and oxbows. This photo depicts the Branco River system, roughly 200 miles northeast of Manaus.

### Here today, gone tomorrow

The mobile suite concept is built around a series of four angler cabins, a dining area, kitchen and a mother ship that carries supplies and generators for providing electricity. The air-conditioned suites are equipped with many of the creature comforts of home, including two oversize beds, toilet, shower, sink, closets, shelves, desks, convenient reading lights, large picture windows and front/rear sun decks that are accessible through screen doors.

What's really cool is the whole deal floats on shallow draft pontoons that connect like chain links. The result is a water train that can be on the move in a matter of minutes. This enables Chapman to access remote areas that are off limits to other outfitters because of natural barriers or exclusivity agreements granted through various Indian reservations or government preserves.

Changing locations periodically within these exclusive areas also ensures the opportunity to cast baits in new water each day before returning to the beach-front flotilla to enjoy appetizers, drinks, a hot meal and a crackling camp fire while you contemplate the next day's fishing.

### Amazon: A watery stage

The Amazon Basin is a massive maze of free flowing rivers, tributaries, creeks, secluded lagoons and backwater oxbows that cover about 40 percent of South America. Where there isn't water there is rainforest, together engulfing

about 2.1 million square miles of real estate and supporting a vast array of wildlife and thousands of species of insects and fish. Chapman's outfit has secured exclusive access to vast stretches of water on several rivers north and south of Manaus, Brazil, the state capital of Amazonas. The camp's mobility allows him to set-up shop wherever the fishing conditions are best. As a rule, the best fishing is always dependent on rainfall and water level conditions. High water is the least favorable for peacock bass fishing, because it allows the fish to disperse and scatter into dense jungle areas that are inaccessible by boat. Conversely, low water usually means good fishing because it shrinks the playground and concentrates the fish around structure and available cover, thus making them much easier to find. The Anglers Inn camp and a host of others were shut down throughout much of November and December 2011 due to unseasonably wet weather conditions that blew out many of the basin's prime river systems. When he elected to reopen this past month, Chapman chose to do it on the Omero River.

A tributary of the Branco River, the Omero twists and turns for about 200 miles and offers about 150 miles of fishable water, not counting the dozens of hidden lagoons, oxbows and smaller tributaries that flank it on both sides.

Being only the second group to access the river in nearly a year, none of us really knew what to expect until we got there. What we discovered was a peacock's lair.

### Omero bruisers

Four anglers. 1,155 peacocks. 6 1/2 days. Plus another 350 multi-species fish.

You do the math. Regardless of how you figure it, it adds up to a fat score and very fast action. So fast, in fact, that I chose not to wet a hook for much of the final day. Day 5 exhausted me.

Flynt and I shared the boat that day and our Brazilian guide, "Tigre," put us on swarm after swarm of peacocks that mauled our baits and stretched our strings until our arms hurt.

Together we caught and released 147 peacocks in 7 1/2 hours fishing. Included in the mix were four fish in the 10-pound class, a dozen or so 7-9 pounders and countless others weighing 4-6 pounds.

My best fish of the entire trip was a beautiful three-bar male I caught on Day 3 while fishing a backwater lagoon with Chapman and our guide "Smiley." The hefty peacock was just shy of 13 pounds. It grabbed a 1/2-ounce yellow/red/brown hair jig made by an Atlanta, GA. outfit called Ultimate Peacock Bass Jigs.

Boatman swears he had a fish explode on a Rapala Skitter Pop topwater 10 feet from the boat that was a good 2-3 pounds heavier than mine, but he was unable to finish the job.

In a battle that lasted all of three seconds, the thick-shouldered bruiser shattered the tip section on his fishing rod and snapped the 80-pound braided line like sewing thread.

"I'm not exactly sure what

happened, but I do know it almost jerked me off the front of the boat when it hit," he recalled. "It sounded like a shotgun going off when the line and rod broke. My reel was grinding like a '54 Ford shifting gears without the clutch pushed in. He whipped me."

Boatman isn't the first angler to lose a war with a tucunaré and he won't be the last. These guys are lean, mean fighting machines with nasty attitudes to match.

Try to horse a big one and something is going to give. Chapman has seen big peacocks bust rods, straighten treble hooks, bend O-rings, fry reel gears and snap magnum fishing lures like a twig. I've heard tales of them bringing body builders to their knees in frustration.

"I tell people all the time that these fish are different," says Chapman. "A 10-pound largemouth is a piece of cake compared to a 10-pound peacock. The bigger they get, the stronger they get. These fish are bulls."

To learn more about the Anglers Inn Amazon operation, go to [www.anglersinn.com](http://www.anglersinn.com), [www.anglersinn.tv](http://www.anglersinn.tv) or call 1-800 -GOTA-FISH (1-800-468-2347).

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# Anglers Inn Amazon Exceeding the Ordinary

BY JOE THOMAS Reel in the Outdoors

It didn't really sink in until we made the second pass over the grass landing strip cut out of the jungle. I was finally here. The Amazon basin... The rainforest... The massive expanse of river, tributary, stream and lagoon that cuts through the wilderness like so many veins and capillaries... and home to the Peacock Bass.

This excursion really started for me almost 30 years ago. I began to hear stories and read articles about an exotic species of fish that lived in the Amazon River and its tributaries. A fish that would crush a topwater bait like a great white shark crushes its unlucky prey. Even more interesting to me were the people who set out into this incredible wilderness in search of these fish. I imagined rugged individuals with machete in one hand and fishing rod in the other hacking their way deep into the jungle to find these elusive, beautiful fish. More times than not, the name that was mentioned the most was a young outfitter from all places, New Jersey, by the name of Billy Chapman, Jr. Yep, that Billy Chapman, Jr!

If you're even remotely familiar with fishing, then you recognize the name. Billy Chapman, Jr. is widely known as the foremost fishing outfitter in the world. He's the leader in trophy Mexican bass fishing and his original Anglers Inn Lodge on Lake El Salto is considered by serious bass anglers as a rite of passage that often requires an annual pilgrimage to remind oneself just how incredible it really is. From there, Anglers Inn has grown to include a new Anglers Inn Lodge on Mexico's Lake Mateos and Anglers Inn Offshore in Mazatlan which offers some of the most exciting blue water fishing in North America. For his efforts, Billy was inducted into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in 2009. Not too shabby at all I'd say.

So, when others would justifiably sit back and bask in their well deserved accolades, Billy didn't slow down. He doubled down. He yearned to return to where it all started, "The Amazon Basin".

As we rolled to a stop on the grass landing strip there he was, trademark smile and all. Billy was eager to show me how ingenuity, hard work and a little creativity was going to bring Peacock Bass fishing back to the Amazon the "Anglers Inn Way". As the boats were loaded for our 90-minute ride up river to camp, I admit I had some doubts. Not about the fishing of course, but about how Billy would bring his trademark signature service to one of the most challenging environments in the world.

If you've never been to Anglers Inn, then let me fill you in. The service is legendary. Billy is all about "exceeding the ordinary" as to your expectations and he does that better than anyone. I've had the fortunate opportunity to travel, fish and hunt in some of the world's most desired locations from Alaska to Africa, New Zealand to New Brunswick and just about everywhere in between. Once there, I can't help but to compare other outfitters to

Anglers Inn. Unfortunately that's a pretty high bar to set because in all my experiences few even come close to Anglers Inn.

Maybe it's the handpicked staff that caters and I mean really caters to your every need. It could be the accommodations, which are always top notch at Anglers Inn. The food? Outstanding! I would be remiss to not mention the world famous Anglers Inn Margarita, the perfect way to top off a perfect day of fishing.

So how in the world could Billy take this signature service and transplant it in the Amazon? I would soon find out.



As our boat rounded a channel bend I saw it. There, perfectly perched on a pristine sandy beach was our camp. I recognized it from the videos on Anglers Inn's YouTube Channel. There they were. Four floating suites awaiting myself, my producer Jim Kramer and Billy's other guests from both the States and Brazil. As we pulled up next to what would be our home for the next 6 days we are greeted by one of Anglers Inn Amazon's hard working staff offering two cool Anglers Inn Margaritas. Yes!



Billy couldn't wait to show us around. We entered our floating suite based on a design developed personally by Billy himself. He's proud of it and he should be. Built upon a pontoon platform, the floating suite is unreal. Two comfortable beds. A bathroom and shower. It even features a work area! And as he opens the back door to unveil the deck that overlooks this beautiful river I realize I want one of these. It's that cool...literally, as the air conditioner makes the suite almost chilly.



Floating Dining Room

Billy's not done. We head to the dining boat as our gear is safely packed away by the staff. It's spacious and loaded. Just outside a friendly staffer is preparing lunch in the floating kitchen as the guides begin to prepare the boats for fishing. Billy sets out the ground rules. He tells me that the guides are natives that know the rivers and backwater lagoons better than I know my Ohio farm. They travel with Billy when he "caravans" his floating suites up and down the river in search of new water. This is the key. Billy is totally mobile. If the water levels rise or fall, which they're prone to do on this wild waterway, Billy simply packs up and moves his camp to a new location. While bigger fishing boats are limited as to where they can travel, Billy is anything but. This is what makes his Amazon operation fascinating. Billy Chapman Jr. hasn't just come back to the Amazon basin. He's come back to conquer it with what I consider one of the most unique operations I've ever seen.

As we wrap up our tour of the mother ship that carries all of the provisions and fuel for the generators, I meet some of the staff. They're quick with a friendly smile and truly seem to be as interested in me as I am in them. They travel as families, children and all. The kids are absolutely adorable and I'm immediately drawn to them. They're fishing and swimming from our beach and having the time of their lives. They are happy. There's no insincere "can I help you even though I don't want to" attitude that we've become accustomed to in the States.



Michael Cooke from Canada

As our lunch is prepared in the galley Billy explains to me how our laundry will be done daily and what will be on the dinner menu. Tonight, we will enjoy a Brazilian BBQ of chicken, pork and steak cooked over an open pit dug in the sand and served with rice, beans, fried bananas, fruit and topped off with chocolate cake. That's right. I'll be enjoying chocolate cake while sitting on a beach in the middle of the Brazilian rainforest with my friends. You tell me if it gets any better than that.

As for the fishing....do I really need to go there? If I counted my fish, which I generally don't, I would have needed a clicker that went to four digits. Piranha, Arowana, Payara, gigantic catfish and of course the king of all freshwater game fish, the peacock bass all ply these waters and all offer an unforgettable fishing



Pamela Bunch from Texas

experience surrounded by wildlife that most people only see in a zoo.

If you must know, we caught over 300 peacock bass and another 80 of exotic species. Jim was filming for two of my TV shows that will appear on the Outdoor Channel in June. That's right, I caught the fish and Jim, bless his heart, filmed. The good news is he captured on film over 90 of the most vicious top water strikes I have ever seen. See for yourself as they broadcast on Outdoor Channel. You won't be disappointed!



Gerald Henning from Missouri

Congratulations Billy Chapman Jr. You've done it. You've brought impeccable service to the heart of the world's most demanding wilderness. You've done it the only way you know how, "The Anglers Inn way". The Amazon will never be the same.



João Adriano Ribeiro from Brazil



Stan Fagerstrom

## A Paradise for Peacocks

By Stan Fagerstrom

**Stan** is one of the pioneers of bass fishing in the western United States. No one in that part of the country has written more about bass fishing. He is a decorated combat veteran of World War 11 who began writing immediately after returning from almost two years of serving with an infantry rifle company in the jungles of the South Pacific. He has been at it ever since.

Stan is an award-winning outdoor writer who has written for a variety of prestigious publications including Bassmaster, Bassin, Field & Stream, Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, Western Outdoors and many others. He has written countless newspaper columns. Most of his writing is currently appearing in four different Internet columns.

Bass fishing has always been his first love where angling is concerned. His first book, CATCH MORE BASS, was published in 1973.

Stan is equally recognized for his artistry with a rod. Known internationally as "The Master Caster," he has been featured in outdoor shows since 1952. His skills with casting and spinning equipment have taken him from Tulsa to Tokyo and from Birmingham to Brazil. Years ago Covey Bean, an outdoor writer for the Sunday Oklahoman, wrote: "When Stan Fagerstrom talks casting, people listen." Decades have passed since those words were written, but today folks still watch and listen as this white-haired wonder works his casting magic.

Billy Chapman Jr. has done it again!

If you've followed bass angling, and many thousands do, Chapman's name is probably familiar to you. Few individuals have had a greater impact on the bass angling world. Billy and his father Bill Chapman, Sr. led the way in providing the wondrous bass fishing now to be found in the lakes of Mexico. He also introduced catch and release angling to that part of the world.

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to be Chapman's guest at his Anglers Inn on Mexico's Lake El Salto knows what I'm talking about. The same can be said about his Anglers Inn Lodge at Mexico's Lake Mateos. But it isn't the almost unbelievable largemouth angling you sometimes run into at either of these lakes I have in mind. Now, you see, the internationally recognized outfitter and lodge operator has taken his tremendous talents back into the heart of the Amazon.

I say "back" into the Amazon because it was those fantastic peacock bass of the Amazon and its tributaries where he earned the title, pioneer! It was the jungles that gave him his first opportunity to start making bass fishing dreams come true for Amazon visitors. Billy was still in his 20's when he began booking trips for jungle bass anglers in Venezuela. Within his first five years in the jungle he designed and supervised the construction of the first two peacock bass fishing lodges ever built in that part of the Amazon.

What he's doing in the Amazon today, almost has to be seen to be believed. Again, if you've been to Anglers Inn at Lake El Salto or Lake Mateos in Mexico you're aware of the kind of service his crews provide. Believe it or not, today he's done the same thing with his brand new operation now known as Anglers Inn Amazon, but he has taken a somewhat different approach.

I'm no stranger to the Amazon. I've had the opportunity over the years to make three different trips. The first of my three trips was through the country of Colombia decades ago. The two most recent adventures were both into the Amazon by way of Brazil. I can guarantee you I never had the opportunity to experience anything resembling the kind of set up Billy Chapman has now made available.

Please note the pictures that accompany this column. Chapman told me a few years ago what he planned to do for anglers hoping to experience the thrill of tangling with one of the world's greatest sports fish---the jungle's peacock bass.

"Stan," he said, "I'm going down there and build a series of floating mobile suites. I want to be able to move them into different areas of the Amazon and its tributaries. That way I'll be able to take clients to where the fishing prospects are best."



Billy Chapman Jr. knows what it takes to catch the Amazon jungle's peacock bass. Now he's making it easier than ever for anglers who are interested in doing the same thing on an Amazon trip.



This photo shows Billy Chapman's floating suites on the move. The Anglers Inn Amazon floating suites are usually moved every other day. That way Chapman is able to get where others can't go and put his clients where fishing prospects are best.

I'll be darned if that's not exactly what he's done! It's already attracting the attention from anglers all over the world. It's not at all difficult, having fished the jungle's rivers myself to appreciate what Chapman has been successful in doing. There are a few places in the jungle that accommodate visiting Amazon anglers. But for the most part, they are permanent structures built on land or boats with limited space for their clients.

The smaller fishing boats they provide are only able to take their customers into nearby areas of the jungle.

Depending on water conditions, they might or might not be able to put you where the prospects for peacocks are good.

I've seen times on some of the Amazon's rivers where I couldn't buy a strike. On other occasions I've seen areas where those lure smashing peacock were all over the place. By far the best action usually came in the most remote spots. The opportunity for you to reach those remote spots is exactly what Chapman's Anglers Inn Amazon operation provides. The Amazon, you see, has an almost unbelievable fluctuation in water levels. I'm told the floating dock at Manaus, the place that really serves as the major city of entry into the jungle, fluctuates as much as 48-feet. "peacock bass fishing," Billy says, "is usually best when the water level is low. Mobility and exclusivity is the combination that creates the best chance for a great peacock bass fishing trip.

"Our Anglers Inn Floating Suites move like a water train going beyond natural barriers to pristine and exclusive Indian reserves. Our entire operation can move every other day during your visit and keeps you in new water where the



Here's what the interior of one of the floating suites looks like. Each unit is air-conditioned and has its own shower, bathroom, oversized bed, personal closet and desk/work space.

competition can't go. You have my guarantee you'll experience the usual 'Anglers Inn Way' style of personal service in the process."

Going to the Amazon with Chapman's Floating Suites also offers another major advantage. You're never going to be more than a relatively short boat ride from your home base. I've been in the Amazon when our guide took us way the heck back into jungle. Sometimes it took far too long to get back to the lodge. I've also had the unpleasant experience of having our boat run into motor trouble and being left in a situation way back in the jungle boonies where it wasn't at all certain that we'd be able to get back at all.

"We recommend," Billy says, "that you do it the "Anglers Inn Way" and return to your floating suite at noon for a hot lunch, a cool shower and siesta. "Because of our mobility we can keep the good fishing close enough so that you're usually only looking at a boat ride of from 15 – 30 minutes to get back.



Anglers Inn Amazon clients enjoying a late evening meal on one of the pristine beaches deep in the Amazon jungle.

There's one other aspect of what Anglers Inn offers that you need to know about. I've mentioned the possible fluctuation of the jungle's river levels. Rivers that were fishable one week might be out of shape the next.

If that happens when you've booked a trip with Anglers Inn Amazon you're going to be notified in advance. A jungle-fishing trip doesn't come cheap. Among other things, you'll have to fly to Miami and from Miami to Manaus, Brazil. Chapman's clients are contacted when the jungle rivers are out of shape and are apprised of the facts.



As I've mentioned, I've been in the Amazon when you couldn't buy a bite. I'd never have gone had I known how poor the fishing prospects were at that particular time. The way Chapman operates, you won't be faced with this problem. You'll be told about it. You may have to change dates and rebook your flight but that sure beats parting with some big bucks and then finding poor fishing prospects when you get there.

I could write 10 more pages about what you'll find on an Anglers Inn Amazon adventure. There's really no need for me to do so. It's easy to find everything you need to know from times and prices to what to bring and what's provided.

You can do that at your own convenience by simply calling 1 800 GOTA-FISH or by visiting [www.anglersinn.com](http://www.anglersinn.com) & [www.anglersinn.tv](http://www.anglersinn.tv) on the Internet.

What you do need to know is Anglers Inn Amazon is receiving great reviews. The first week of the season the 7 clients on the Floating Suites caught 2500 Peacock Bass plus hundreds of fish of various species like piranha, arowana, payara and huge catfish that roan the tributaries and lagoons in 6 & ½ days! You do the math!

I know Billy Chapman Jr. and I know what he stands for. Few men anywhere have done a better job of making the dreams of countless anglers come true more often than he has. That's undoubtedly why he's one of the very few, if not the only outfitter/lodge operator, ever inducted to the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame.

My only regret is that Anglers Inn Amazon didn't exist when I made my three earlier visits to the jungle I've mentioned. Be assured that's where I'd been headquartered if it had been.

One of the questions I get most often from anglers headed for an Amazon peacock bass adventure involves what lures to take. Anglers Inn offers you an optional **Amazon Tough Safari Ready** package where you'll find everything that you will need when you arrive at your fishing destination. I mean everything! Rods, reels, correct tackle, rain suits, extra clothes and of course Billy's Amazon Tough Boat and Travel Bag. This 20-liter dry bag has it all from sun block, lip block and repellent to fishing gloves and from your Amazon Tough sun hat to Gatorade packets. Billy's bag has all the items to insure that you are prepared for an Amazon Safari. Billy and Anglers Inn Amazon never miss a trick!





**BY GARY GIUDICE** Owner and President of Blue Heron Communications

Sitting on the back porch, Margarita in hand and a fine Cuban cigar clinched in my teeth, I watched a caiman swim by. I don't know how long it was but it looked to have about an 8 to 10-inch spread between its eyes and it looked exactly like an alligator to me. By now I had accepted good drinks, fine cigars, giant reptiles and great companions as a way of life down here.

Down here is a long ways back in the Amazon Jungle. A long ways. I asked outfitter Billy Chapman, Jr. who sat beside me – “Hey pal, where’s the closest restaurant?” – Billy blew a perfect smoke ring followed by a careful sip of Crown Royal before he nodded at the bass boat bobbing in the caiman’s wake, tied to the back of the floating suite I called home for my week in the jungle.

– “See that boat right there?”

– “Yeah.”

– “It’d take you five days in that boat if you stayed on it 24-hours a day to get to one.”

– “Billy, I don’t need a hamburger that bad.”

– “No problem, Hermondo there would have you one fried in about ten minutes if you asked him.”

I didn’t want a hamburger. I was just curious how far back in the Amazon Jungle we really were. But miles don’t begin to tell the story. Grasping how far away things are that I normally take for granted puts everything in a proper per-



Gary Giudice’s peacock bass fell to a hand tied jig designed by one of the Angler’s Inn guides.

spective – at least for me. There are no 7-Elevens or 911 operators or tackle stores or traffic jams or nosey neighbors or anything anglers consider normal. No litter, no horns, no stress. Smoke rings come out nearly perfect every time and the fish always bite. Oh, sure, there’s rain in the rainforest and there are bugs that may, but there are rain suits and bug sprays, so who cares?

There is no place on Earth where we could catch more fish, more varieties of fish, and do it in a place unbelievable wildlife flourishes, untouched by the hand of man. No place!

Howler and spider monkeys swing in the trees. Macaws and parrots and all manner of colorful birds catch your eyes and your ears. Tapirs and strange-looking turtles stalk the riverbanks. Some animals are rarely seen, but you know they are there: Anacondas and Jaguars keep to themselves, adding even more to the jungle’s mystique.

But it’s the fish that haunt the angler, not the roar of the Jaguar or the snap of the caiman’s jaw. Peacock bass get the headlines, and maybe they should, but if they get all the glory it’s a disservice to many of the other fish found here. There are some 3,000 different kinds of fish that live in the Amazon, and while most anglers don’t give a rip about most of them, many of them we do.

Besides the various peacocks, there is the *payara*, with long bottom teeth that fit into it’s upper jaw and *piranha* that fight well and taste great; *pirarucu* that grow to the size of a box car but are rarely caught and the cow-sized *red catfish*. Add the countless others with hard-to-pronounce names but which readily take baits and jump high as a tarpon and you realize what a place, what a fishery. A home of dreams!

It’s one of those places that, as an angler, I always wanted to visit. All my life I’ve read the stories and seen the pictures. I knew the myths about the piranhas and the headhunters plus I knew the legend of the peacock bass. I was drawn to it like any angler, just like you. If you aren’t an angler you



Specie: Papa





Grilled Piranha tastes a lot like crappie.

anywhere at the drop of a hat. He can pick up and go in under an hour and you would never even know he was there.

Heavy rains? No problem, just move up stream. Fishing pressure? No problem, just move over a shallow part of the river where the others can't reach. Fish not biting? No problem, go someplace where they are. And he does this without sacrificing anything in terms of comfort for the people in his camp.

The way Anglers Inn camp set up is like this: two anglers share a floating suite, which includes two beds, a bathroom, desk, air-conditioner, electricity – even laundry service. They get a fully equipped bass boat with a great guide that was raised on the river and all the tackle any angler would need. The dining room has wonderful chow and a fully stocked bar. All of these amenities and, oh yeah, there's wild, virgin jungle right out the door.

might not understand it. But if you are, you know that fishing the Amazon is something that you will have to do, something you must experience at least once before you die, regardless of the sacrifice. It's on your list!

My fishing buddy for this trip, Kenyon Hill, is a professional angler. He's never had a job besides that. Not that it's not a job, it most certainly is, and a difficult one at that. He knows fishing and the Amazon was on his list, too, so we called Billy Chapman Jr. at Anglers Inn International. We've both fished with Billy in Mexico numerous times so our Amazon choice was an easy one. We know Billy, we know his high standards of service and we trust him with our vacations and our well-being. We didn't know about much else, except that he had one more thing that, in our eyes, separated him from the pack: the way he sets up his camps.



Kenyon Hill landed this payara with care. You only lip grab one of these one time to learn your lesson!

Night noises are interesting. Who knows what lurks nearby to make such sounds? Who cares, really? It just adds to the experience. When it's time to move, Billy hooks the camp together into a long, train-looking affair and off it goes, leaving nothing behind.

The fish always bite. The thing that impressed me the most about the fishing was not that they fought hard or that they were big or even that they were so beautiful. It was the fact that the skill level of the angler did not factor into the catching as much as I thought it would.

Anglers Inn does not use a base camp or a mother ship like the rest of the outfitters in the Amazon. Billy put together what might be best described as a floating train that moves on a whim and draws very little water. He can move it almost

Kenyon and I thought we could parlay our years of experience fishing for largemouth bass into instant peacock-catching success. That was a mistake. Peacock bass are nothing like largemouth bass. They don't bite the same or act the same. So while Kenyon and I were trying to force-feed largemouth tactics to the Peacock bass, the rest of the camp listened to the local guides merrily catching peacock bass. Oh, we caught them, but not better





Billy Chapman, Jr. and Mr. Omero.

or as often as less-experienced anglers.

Every peacock bass bait known to man is on the boats, but the guides know which baits work best at any given time. While we were there, big jerk baits and jigs tied by the guides worked far better than anything Kenyon and I tried to force-feed the fish.

Most of the peacock bass we caught were in the 5 to 10-pound range, mean with plenty of fight. Some were much larger, others smaller, but we caught plenty. Between the peacocks we'd catch other fish that surprised us: *dogfish*, *payara*, *piranha* and others. We saw the fabled *pirarucu* but could not get them to bite. They were huge – big as a Smart Car! Honest!

The piranhas, with their nasty set of teeth, tend to destroy baits but fight well and taste great. For one shore lunch the guides made a quick grill out of some saplings and cooked a few piranha with some seasoning they had on hand. Good eats! Very similar to crappie, I thought. The ones we caught weighed around two to three pounds, I'd guess. It pays to unhook these with care.

Going on a trip like this or any other serious wilderness adventure can't be taken lightly. Health, for some, is an issue. Billy has a satellite phone for emergencies. A prior visit to the family doctor will get an angler lined out on required immunizations and any other medical advice.



BassMaster Elite Angler Kenyon Hill, from Norman, Oklahoma with a nice peacock bass. Largemouth bass tactics don't always work on peacocks but they did on this one.

Day-to-day stuff Billy can deal with in the bush. While we were there, a bug flew into the ear of one of our fellow anglers. It was driving him nuts buzzing around in there. No problem: Billy had him lay his head down on the table; he poured some water in his ear, the bug swam out and that was that. That's why he's the outfitter and we're the anglers.



As anglers, we're sometimes fortunate enough to fish in exotic places, seeing some of the most remote areas on the planet. The Rockies, Alaska, the North Woods of Canada all pale in comparison to the Amazon, where normal is just so far away. We've devoted time and hard-earned resources trying to catch simple creatures on hook and line. And while fishing can be as simple as staring at a red and white bobber or complex as a multiday trip to the jungle, machete in hand, it gets no better than when it's combined with sitting on the back of a floating suite, blowing the perfect smoke ring and holding a cold beverage with a sore arm guessing the length of a caiman.



If you are thinking about going to the Amazon and maintaining your comfort level Anglers Inn Amazon is the way. We have been with Billy Chapman Jr. and Anglers Inn about 13 to 15 times at Lake El Salto and he has taken the same Anglers Inn way down to the Amazon. It is simply an amazing adventure that I'd do all over again.



Pamela Bunch

The food was prepared fresh each day and was delicious. I especially enjoyed the homemade chocolate chip cookies! The small group we fished with made for a fun, friendly group that Win and I will look forward to seeing again.

Fishing was great. The Peacock Bass are so strong that you think you've hooked a monster at each strike. Of course, it's really thrilling when you do land one of these beautiful monsters. Catching a 16 pound and an 18 pound Peacock Bass is an experience I'll revere. It was especially satisfying when they turned out to be the two largest caught for our camp that week. Amazon (Girl) Tough!

Billy Chapman and his Amazon team made my husband's and my trip to Brazil and Peacock Bass fishing on the Amazon a first class adventure all should experience!

Maybe use Wynn's quote as a header for Pam's Big PB

"Pam really does well on these fishing trips," said Win Wynn Bunch. "She takes her time and is patient with what she is doing. That is partly why she is always out fishing me. I was ecstatic when she hauled in the 18 pounder!"



Joan Reem





# BIG NEWS

## Anglers Inn Amazon Returns to the Home of Monster Peacocks – The Unini River



Accessing the overgrown lagoons off the Rio Unini will take effort by guides but the monster peacock are waiting.

Rio Unini, Brazil – The fabled Unini River tributary has been closed to all fishing for 5 years, but now Billy Chapman Jr. and Anglers Inn Amazon, part of a consortium led by Luis Brown's River Plate Outfitters, has secured proper government permits to reopen the remote fishery for a limited time period. Numerous monster peacock bass of over 26 pounds were taken in past years when the fishery was open to sport fishing. This watershed, when water levels are right, is absolutely the best for 20-pound plus peacocks in the Amazon!

Exclusive permits allow only 12 anglers per week to fish the famous upper Rio Unini, the Rio Preto and their many lagoons and lakes this fall from the first-class Anglers Inn Mobile Suites operation. This premium location with very limited access will be available only to a select few anglers. The rivers' sandbars with adjacent deep water at the entrance to most lagoons and those isolated sharp-drop bars and points in the back of the blackwater lagoons usually hold big fish, and they haven't seen a lure for 5 years!

The Rio Unini, a tributary of the Rio Negro located some 210 miles northeast of Manaus, is roughly 200 miles long with about 250 connecting lakes and lagoons throughout its course. Lying along the lower portion is a waterfall and three sets of rapids which prohibit large riverboat access to the majority of the river during all but high-water, non-fishing times. As a result, guests of Anglers Inn Amazon will fly via

charter float plane to the mobile suites on the upper Unini.

The suites will be located about 150 miles or so above the blackwater Unini's confluence with the Rio Negro where there is little evidence of any villages or river residents near the areas being fished. Each day depending on catch results and area-experienced guide feedback, the entire suites operation may move 10 to 20 miles to new waters along the twisting waterway. Anglers Inn with its reputation for first-class service, will keep the operation in great fishing areas and clients happy.



This is one of the monster mid-twenty pound peacock bass caught in the Unini River.



There is plenty of great peacock bass habitat in Unini lagoons such as flooded giant trees, deep black waters and submerged sandbars.



An Unini River guide had to get wet to land this giant peacock for his happy angler!





The Unini River offers numerous hidden lagoons that are loaded with monster peacock bass.

As with any waterways closed to fishing and without other boat traffic for several years, there will be some “machete” work required of the guides in tree-strewn, overgrown creeks to access hidden lagoons. But it will be worth it! Catching big peacock bass in a newly-opened area will provide guests many great memories and the possibility of a new world-record. In addition, considering the unique fauna and flora of the Rio Unini region, such experiences are sure to put a smile on anyone’s face!

Give us a call at 1-800-468-2347 today!

Go to [www.anglersinn.com](http://www.anglersinn.com) and [www.anglersinn.tv](http://www.anglersinn.tv) for video testimonials.



This is one Larry’s monster mid-twenty pound peacock bass caught in the Unini River.

### **Testimonial from Larry Larsen about Anglers Inn Amazon**

“I’ve visited the Amazon 55 times over the past 20 years and stayed in a variety of accommodations from yachts to fixed lodges to tent operations. I’ve fished very remote peacock bass waters from several base camps including small tent, large tent, boat tent, floating tent, floating cabin and all size houseboat operations. Billy Chapman, Jr. calls his comfortable accommodations floating “suites”. And are they SWEET!

The Anglers Inn Amazon accommodations are better thought-out for Amazon fishing adventures than any I’ve stayed in. With over-sized beds, clean roomy interiors and large showers, and front and rear porches, they truly are a step above all others to date and deserve the moniker “suites”. His first-class operation deep in the jungles does offer “Amazon Comfort” as he claims and anglers no longer have to “rough it” when spending a week at a place 500 miles from the nearest road! A tip of my wide-brim hat to Billy!”

#### **Larry Larsen**

*Founder of the Peacock Bass Association & author of 4 peacock bass books*



## Trophy Fishery Marie River

Limited Space Available

### *Anglers Inn Amazon – The Marie River*

Anglers Inn Amazon and their consortium has been awarded some dates on the secluded Marie Indian Reserve known as the “Tucano”. The Marie River, our private fishery, is one of the best “proven” trophy Peacock Bass Rivers. Last season only 60 anglers got to experience this fishery. One of the guests averaged an unprecedented 3 to 8 trophies per boat per day over 18 pounds on topwater props. His boat in two occasions landed doubles trophies over 20 pounds simultaneously!

for 3 hours. You will have a comfortable and relaxing ride to the Floating Suites while enjoying a cold drink and taking in the beauty of the Amazon Basin.

Since lagoon density is low, the Floating Suites will move daily covering a total of 300 nautical miles for the week. At the end of the 300 miles, anglers will depart via float plane refueling in Tefe on the Solimoes River. The newly arrived 8 anglers will fish back to the mouth departing via Express & wheel plane from Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira. This sequence is repeated throughout the Marie season.

The word is out and there is limited space on this “excellent and proven” trophy fishery!

Come experience the “Anglers Inn Way”! The best fishing, food and service with the luxury of the Floating Suites.



This fishery creates an exciting adventure and you will see far more of the rainforest than you would on a standard trip.

Here is how it will work:

The mouth of the Marie ( -0.45°, -66.43°) is near the City of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira on the Negro River. The 8 anglers will arrive at Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira via Caravan wheel charter and travel on our 300HP Express Boat (with business-class reclineable leather seats)

