

Jeff Currier *global fly fishing*

Mahseer drags Curriers into Asia

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“Nepal means ‘never ending peace and love’ while India stands for ‘I’ll never do it again,’ popular saying entrusted to those departing Nepal. Jeff Currier is one of the toughest and most determined people I know. To catch a rare silver fish with giant scales he forked over 160,000 Delta Frequent Flier miles for two tickets to Nepal and spent two-and-a-half months dragging his sweet wife, Yvonne, around Asia.

It’s a given. Harrison Ford must play Currier’s life story which is crammed with enough travel drama to give Indiana Jones heart failure. I’ve resolved “no more Currier following” unless we’re accompanied by the 82nd Airborne. Highlights of past outings included exploring tough neighborhoods in search of pool rooms, great rum, barbecue and hot sauces as well as splashing through near tropical hurricanes, being outboardlessly stranded on a nowhere mangrove cay at night and also ducking under a skiff to avoid roaring flights of African bees. The guy invites excitement like the Crocodile Hunter yet always wriggles away laughing and grinning. He’s fearless.

Primary motivation of the October to mid December adventure was to catch a mahseer, a supercharged rare Himalayan minnow species which includes carp and its many relatives. Little scientific data exists on the many mahseer sub species except that some grow huge. Even less is known about artificial lure and fly fishing for them. Mahseer are



Jeff and Yvonne Currier endured the rigors of India to catch the rare silver mahseer. All fish were released including this 33 pounder from the Cauvery River. (Jeff Currier photo).

native to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Driven too, by Yvonne's desire to trek to the Mt. Everest base camp located at a cool 17,600 feet, the couple also yearned to inspect India's fabled Taj Mahal in Agra. And for luck they journeyed to the holiest Hindu location, the Ganges River in Varanasi. Any third world Currier adventure must include at least a couple of living hell bus and train rides, bouts with thieves and pickpockets, totally unexpected and violent weather, toying with poisonous snakes and stepping on a snoozing crocodile and consuming foods never mentioned in Lonely Planet guides. This time

out the Curriers also became intimate with elephants, rhinos, camels, crocodiles and cobras.

Infrequent but hilarious e-mails of Jeff's latest adventure series entertained his wide spectrum of friends. Accounts of touring and river washing their gentle Asian elephant playmate, joy riding on a camel out in Rajasthan only to stumble across a "year end" camel clearance sale (animals and people stretching to the horizon) on the western Indian/Pakistan border and surviving a tent pancaking sand/rain storm that ended a two year drought in the Thar Desert were more colorfully described than Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing dispatches at their drug-fired best.

Jeff couldn't do his day job (wrangling Jack Dennis Outdoors' trout chasing department) without an unrelenting passion for fishing. This thirst is only quenched by wandering throughout Central and South America, Turkey, Christmas Island, New Zealand and Australia.

Amazingly Jeff continues to sucker Yvonne (aka "Granny" due to her superb culinary skills that supersede even the most talented grandmother's) into these agonizing schemes. Magically she survives being shoved off moving Peruvian trains at KM 88 to access the Inca Trail, never ending boat rides through jungles and open oceans and

being plopped, drenched, shivering and crying on an empty Panama beach near Devils Island. The Curriers regularly create, produce and star in their own versions of the popular televised Survivor series, only with more fishing and minus any supporting cast or deep network pockets!

Initially fueled five years ago by a store customer who once lived in Asia and caught mahseer in India, this ungainly adventure gained breakneck momentum in August. On the Internet Jeff discovered two sportfishing camps on the Cauvery River, 120 km. south of Bangalore. In 1984 the Cauvery produced the all-tackle mahseer world record of 95 pounds.

After the Everest trek, the desert sand and rain “hurricane,” close encounters with rambunctious single horn Asian rhinos that were only rescued by ultra cool elephant language (get Jeff to relate this personally!) and the endless parade of India’s Star Wars-like characters etched in filthy city conditions, chasing mahseer that normally don’t eat artificial flies was a logical vacation opportunity. Never mind that crocodiles unlimited, pythons and cobras keep river users company.

Indian river guides aren’t exactly hip to fly fishing. But Jeff got their attention quickly when his hair mouse pattern drew an explosive strike from an odd sculpin-like fish called a murrel. Known as “snakehead,” several of these unusual creatures made big news last fall when they were found in a Maryland pond. Jeff let his five pounder go, but enjoyed excellent murrel dinners in several guest houses.

Mahseer proved just as difficult to catch on fly as expected although Jeff and Yvonne used Chernoble Ants to pound well over 100 malibar carp or deacon mahseer up to five pounds. According to Jeff’s Asian fishing bible, *Circumventing The Mahseer*, written in 1935, the species eat almost everything from algae to carrion, berries and insects falling from trees. “Their strike is definitely not a cutthroat,” Jeff chuckles. As a fly hits riffle water it gets blasted.

Despite repeated deep water pool bombings with heavyweight lines, the big mahseer shunned Jeff’s arm killing streamer presentations. Finally they resorted to the locally popular “ragi ball” baits. Ragi is a supercharged ground millet doughball with added

berries and seeds. Jeff also packed in Gamakatsu 5/0 hooks so when 33 and 35 pounders tried to pull him literally off the bank, he had a chance to land them on beefy 30 lb. baitcasting tackle.

Jeff's collectable hardcover *Circumventing The Mahseer* also was helpful by the holy Ganges River. With a quick book-to-the-temple blow, Jeff staggered and drove off a bothersome pickpocket. Successful mahseer pursuit obviously requires heavy reading! What's next for the Survivor couple? After he trout fishes Spain in the world fly fishing championships, Jeff may stalk freshwater dorado in South American jungles. The next big adventure after turning 37 in Everest base camp is the Dark Continent. "I'd like to climb Kilimanjaro for my 40th birthday," he vows.