





Jeff Currier is somewhat of an enigma in the fly fishing world. No doubt everyone reading this has at one time or another read one of Jeff's tales into the unknown. He's a self professed junky for new species to target on fly and no stranger to the seminar circuit where he gives insight into fly fishing, travel, casting, art and more. We handed Jeff a bunch of questions and this rest is his story.

WHO IS JEFF CURRIER?

I'm a pretty chill dude that calls Victor, Idaho home. I've been fly fishing a hell of a long time starting with growing up in Massachusetts and New Hampshire chasing warm water fish species. In 1987 I moved to Idaho for the amazing trout fishing. These days I find myself traveling far from Idaho to fly fish more than I ever imagined. I've presently fished in 62 countries and caught over 400 species of fish on the fly.

When I was young I never thought there would be fishing travel in my life. My dad and I dreamt of a trip to New Zealand together but such travel was something folks with money did. But in my 20's I worked up the courage to load up a backpack with a few rods and ride the busses through Central America. That trip worked out like a dream and I gradually learned the ropes of budget travel. By the time I was 30 I'd fished in more than 20 countries and was damn good at DIY fishing around the world.

No doubt my passion is mixing fly fishing with travel. Nowadays I get invited to fish incredible places and I don't ride the local busses as much. I miss that part to an extent. What hasn't changed however is my love of catching new species of fish on the fly. Indeed, I like the top game fish of the world, but any cool new fish I run across gets me excited.

To make a few bucks I'm a guest speaker at numerous national fly fishing shows in the US during winter months. I entertain and teach seminars at fly fishing clubs throughout the US and Canada. I love sharing what I've learned in fly fishing and my experiences around the planet.

I also paint fish and write an article on occasion. I'm the author of two books. Best of all I'm an ambassador for some of the best companies in fly fishing – Yellow Dog Flyfishing, Simms, R.L. Winston, Scientific Anglers, Costa Sunglasses, Bauer Fly Reels and Yeti.

Back to your original question –

Jeff Currier is the luckiest fly fisherman on earth and in 1996 I took my dad to New Zealand – backpacker style!

HOW WERE YOU INTRODUCED INTO FLY FISHING?

My dad was a big fly fisherman. In fact one of my grandfathers was too (ironically not my dad's father). Starting at about age three dad set me up with a worm and bobber. Like any kid I loved watching that bobber bounce and had a lot of success with the local Sunfish and the occasional Bass. However, I couldn't help but notice dad's interesting method of fishing. It looked more fun than mine.

When I was five dad and I hit opening day of Trout season on the Ipswich River in Topsfield, Massachusetts. I was drifting worms in the current and he was stripping various wet flies. Let's just say dad smoked me that day. Seriously, I remember it well. I caught one Rainbow Trout and he caught about 20. Sure, like any good dad he let me reel them in, but I was ticked and he knew it.

That Christmas I got a telescoping fly rod with reel and line. I struggled that next summer like any six year old would, learning to cast while losing flies. It was so frustrating at times that I even went as far as to fish worms on my fly rod. Luckily our neighborhood was loaded with Pumpkinseed Sunfish. Those little fellas are so forgiving that I managed to catch them. They kept my interest and by the time I was seven I was fly fishing whenever I could.

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE FAVORITE LOCATIONS?

This is one of the toughest questions I answer. I have about ten favorites and the order of them changes, often based on how much I'm craving a certain fish or landscape. Right now I'd have to say number one is chasing the Sunfish family around my childhood stomping grounds of New Hampshire.

I spent every summer as a kid in Wolfeboro, NH on Lake Winnepesaukee. Its where fishing all began for me. I fished Bass, Bluegill, Bullhead and Landlocked Salmon. It was paradise and though the fishing has gone downhill some, its still great. Hands down what I like the most is that its easy, relaxing, safe, close to home – something I can't say about my other two favorites.



My second favorite is Africa. I won't pinpoint a fish (although I love Tigerfish and Nile Perch) or a specific country (recently I was in Cameroon and it was unreal!) but rather the whole Africa fly fishing experience. Much of Africa is still wild and untouched. There's always adventure to be had with many uncertainties from unexpected wildlife encounters to travel hindrances. It's one of the few places left where when fishing you are truly living on the edge.

My third favorite is the Indian Ocean. I've been lucky to fish the Seychelles a couple times as well as the Red Sea and St. Brandon's Atoll a few times. Though I catch tons of interesting species in the Amazon, the Indian Ocean always provides a new Grouper or Snapper to admire. And then there's the big time game fish from GT's to Bumphead Parrots. These fish are challenging from fooling them to eat a fly all the way to landing them. Furthermore the Indian Ocean is a beautiful place.

I need to toss out a fourth favorite because how can I not love the Amazon? The Amazon has so many different species of fish that I go crazy. Whether it's the different types of Peacock Bass or Piranhas you never know what you'll catch. The rainforest is also pristine and beautiful. There are some sketchy critters there but the forest is so dense you need to be lucky to see them. In addition to fishing I'm a bit of a bird nerd and the Amazon provides 24 hours a day.

FAVORITE SPECIES?

I get this question almost daily and everyone expects me to toss out Tigerfish or Peacock Bass or Permit or some other big time species. I love all these amazing fish but my favorite fish comes from my favorite place to fish. It's a fish that isn't too hard, but not too easy to catch. They get good size. The topwater fishing for them is incredible. And they were the first serious species of fish I ever caught and learned to get good at catching. I love the Smallmouth Bass.

MOST MEMORABLE FISH CAUGHT?

Hands down my most memorable fish caught was a 27lb Golden Mahseer on

the Ramganga River in India in 2008. It was my second adventure in India. The first trip in 2002 was three months long and I did not catch one. Honestly, when I went home from that first trip I wrote the Mahseer off – it wasn't going to happen because that trip to India beat me up so bad – local busses and trains along with some lovely stomach issues. I was done there. But I ended up back as a guest of my friend, Misty Dhillon.

The Giant Mahseer came about six days into the 2008 trip. Misty was guiding my friend and I was with one of Misty's camphands and guide. I spotted this fish and it looked so big we thought it might be a rock. Long story short I hooked him swinging a size 8 sculpin pattern. The fight was insane and it's a miracle I landed him. We got a few pics. I knew it was a monster so I got the length and put him on the Boga (A tool I no longer use to weigh fish). He was 48" and 27lbs and later became the IGFA catch and release record.

So catching this fish was magnificent but that afternoon I came within one step of being eaten by a Bengal tiger. It's a long but incredible story. I can only tell the story around the campfire with a few beers. Honestly just telling the story terrifies me every time.

WHAT DOES A CALENDAR YEAR LOOK LIKE AND WHAT'S COMING UP THIS YEAR?

No doubt from afar it looks as if all I do is fish, but I give more than 40 presentations a year. Most of these take place in January, February and early March. In the spring my fishing travels start. I might hit the salt a couple times, sometimes far away. I also Trout fish at home and Smallmouth Bass fish somewhere. My fall season is about the same, usually it involves a jungle trip of some sort.

Left on this year's books is a trip to Canada for Pike in two weeks. In September I'm headed to Brazil with my friends that own Untamed Angling. And in December I'm hosting a Yellow Dog Adventures trip to Providence in the Seychelles. This trip is a custom so I'll be there for eleven days. Then a stop in Dubai to fish Queenies with my friend Nick Bowles on the way home.





RISE AND FALL OF DESTINATIONS?

I'll start by being positive with a rise. Let's take the Snake River in Jackson, Wyoming. When I arrived on the scene in 1987 big Cutthroats were hard to come by and numbers of Trout in general were low due to overharvest and dams not releasing enough flow in the winter for the fish to survive. There weren't enough anglers to care about the mediocre fishing.

But then fly fishing became more popular. Huge in fact by 1995 in our area. More anglers bring more money and the next thing you know Trout Unlimited and the folks in the area pushed through catch and release, and water flows were regulated not to be too low in the winter months. It took less than five years for Cutthroat populations to bounce back and these days big Cutthroats are not uncommon.

The drawback for me is that these days the Snake and other blue-ribbon trout streams all over the Rocky

Mountain West are ridiculously crowded. Worse, many of the fish you catch have already been caught before – not once but more than ten times! And they wear it in the condition of the lips and some fish hardly fight anymore. You create excellent fishing and the people come in hoards. Remarkably the fishing holds up, but in the prime season, there are too many people for me to go anymore.

Most of the best waters of the world are similar to the Rocky Mountains. Belize is an amazing fishery and should remain fantastic because Belizeans do a great job of protecting their resources. But when I fished there in the late 80's and early 90's this Central American country was a wild place. If you had a motor failure back then you could be stranded and taken away by the mosquitos on a small island. These days there are lodges on every island and you will see other anglers most of the time.



So I've seen changes. I love the awareness of the fish, the animals and the environment that we get by bringing more people to the sport, but I do believe we over-love the easy to get to places and have taken the "wild" out of these places as well, by bringing so many humans here.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST FEAR FOR THE FUTURE?

I have two fears:

First is a continuation of where I ended your last question. For me I fish because it brings me to nature. It allows me to be part of the environment and enjoy the "wild". When I hike ten miles into the backcountry in Yellowstone National Park to go fishing and I don't see any other humans – that's a wild place. But when I hike there and run into a dozen other anglers – I don't care how far back I am. I lose that feeling of being in a wild



place and I can't stand it. My second concern is that there aren't enough young people getting in the sport. I don't have kids but do go out of my way to encourage kids to fly fish. Especially when a kid shows up at a seminar of mine or contacts me through email with questions. I also have three nieces. They can all fly fish and for the most part they enjoy it. But man, they have a ton of distractions starting with that stupid phone!

HOW DID YOUR ARTISTIC SIDE START?

I received numerous detentions in school as a kid for drawing on the desk. At the same time, I got all A's in the art classes. But when I took off to college the artsy side of me went by the wayside. I studied to be a naturalist then soon found myself making a living by working at a fly shop, teaching fly fishing and guiding in the Yellowstone area. I didn't do any art of any sort for at least ten years.



Then I wrote my first book, "Currier's Quick and Easy Guide to Saltwater Fly Fishing", and did all my illustrations myself in pen and ink. My publisher, friend and incredible mentor, Gary Lafontaine, loved the book but insisted we do the book in full color. This meant either I hire someone or redo everything myself. Hiring wasn't an option. Luckily, I'm a man of the all-nighter and in six months I taught myself how to use watercolor paints. I page through the book from time to time and see the art isn't anything as good as what I produce these days, but what incredible memories. The neat thing about that tidbit is Gary Lafontaine knew all along I was an artist and he wanted me to bust out.

Since that first book I've illustrated another for myself and several for other fly fishing writers. I've painted about 70 species of fish for commission work and the images are used in books, logos, by several companies on shirts, fly boxes, etc. And, I have my own store with my famous fish coffee mugs, beer steins and sun shirts.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BRAND AMBASSADOR?

First of all, being a brand ambassador is an honor. The term "brand ambassador" has become a bit loose. There are some brands out there willing to list every guide or pro available to enhance their company. And there are brand ambassadors that will join any company just to get on their list. I get hit often by new companies to join them before they even know if I use their product. This isn't what being an ambassador is all about.

I'm only a brand ambassador for companies serious about delivering a high quality product. I'm fortunate to be with Simms, Winston, Yellow Dog Flyfishing, Scientific Anglers, Costa Sunglasses, Bauer Reels and Yeti. Before Simms releases a new wader or Winston lists a new fly rod model they let me use the test samples. Often times before Yellow Dog Flyfishing sells a new destination, I'm the lucky guy that checks it out before they offer it. To me it's exciting and a big achievement to know that I'm respected by the industry enough to be a brand ambassador. They trust me to tell the truth about a product and I'm proud of this.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHERS?

Fish hard. Don't try to impress, but rather let others discover your talents on their own through your good angling and hard work. Be a conservationist when and wherever you can. Always be open and share what you know. And remember why you fly fish and don't ever change from that.

www.jeffcurrier.com





Above left: Jeff signing some autographs
Above right: Getting to know the guide, Tanzania, Yellow Dog, Photo Jim Klug
Below left: Hitching accross Africa 2005.
Below centre: Smallmouth Bass, New Hampshire, 2012
Below right: Big Tigerfish, Tanzania, Yellow Dog, Photo Jim Harris.