



# Guides

## STONEFLY LODGE

**Trevor Hawkins** introduces a new lodge in New Zealand's South Island run by experienced hosts.

**S**ituated high on banks of the famous Motueka River, between its confluence with the Wangapeka and Baton River, lies Stonefly Lodge. The lodge is the fulfilment of a long held dream of Kate and John Kerr, formerly of Cape Don Lodge on the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory.

Stonefly Lodge's central location between three of New Zealand's major

national parks is a real bonus as it offers close access to a huge diversity of world class fly fishing for brown trout in spectacular scenery.

Although, after spending a few days there recently and checking out the Motueka River directly below the lodge you wouldn't get an argument from me if you just wanted to stay on the lodge property and not venture past the front gates.

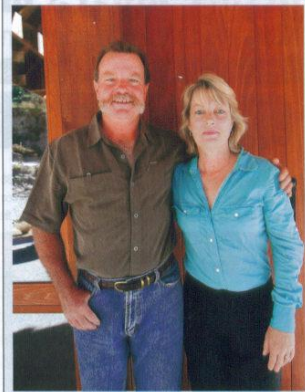


With so many fishing options so close to the lodge it's difficult to decide where to start!



### FWF CONTACT DETAILS

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Your hosts, Kate and John Kerr.

### The Mot

The Motueka River is said to hold the highest number of trout per kilometre of any New Zealand river. While this may or may not be true, the fact is that it has a huge head of trout averaging 1–1.5 kg with many fish surpassing these weights. It's equally famous for spectacular evenings rises, but then again, why pass up an early drink and game of snooker back at the lodge before dinner when you've already had a great day on the river?

The Motueka River is for the most part too big to throw a cast across and in many parts too deep to wade. This works for both trout and angler in allowing areas for fish to retreat to and not have every angler that is wading the banks shut down the fishing. For the most part it is easy wading with enough areas to safely cross backwards and forwards to spread the angling load. All up, it's a great water and one that I can't wait to get back on to.

A competent Aussie fly fisher could fish the Motueka river with typical nymph and indicator fishing, dry fly or swinging wets without the need for a guide and still expect good quality fishing that would, for the most part, surpass anything on offer in Australia. There is good angler access for kilometres along this river outside of the lodge's property.

### Going elsewhere

For those who want to venture further afield, I seriously suggest booking one of the lodge guides in order to maximise the time spent fishing rather than driving around aimlessly looking for different waters and then finding appropriate angler access points. The average visiting angler just doesn't have the local knowledge of the streams or the fish spotting abilities and rig setups to get the most from their holiday, and as good as the scenery and

lodge may be, we all would like to at least get some shots at fish (even if we don't catch them) while on a fishing trip!

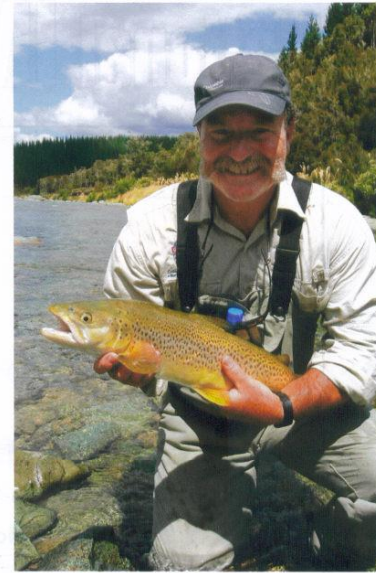
Many of the streams in these areas hold big fish but there is a lot of water between them and on some, an angler (even with a guide) might only expect to see a half dozen fish in a day's session and maybe get casts off to half of these!

You need to maximise the odds in your favour and using a guide does this. If you can afford it, factor in a guide for at least a couple of days during your visit.

On my trip earlier this year I had the services of two of the lodge guides, Aaron Ford and Paul van de Loo. Both of these blokes are really switched-on and know their stuff but even so, the fishing was tough due to major rains (it is New Zealand remember) days before that had raised the rivers significantly, pushed riverbeds around and even discoloured some waters. We got fish on dries and nymphs, with the best pushing seven pounds and a couple fished for that would have gone ten. However, I can honestly say that without the guides help I may have been struggling to get more than a couple off my own bat over the two and a half days fishing I had.

### Gearing up

For the most part a 5 or 6 weight rod will cover all situations with my preference being for a 6 weight to cover casting big, bulky dries or heavy tandem nymph rigs on long leaders on heavy waters. Always take a spare rod, reel and line just in case. If you're not using a guide, then take a landing net (they always carry them) as on some of these big trout it is almost mandatory, but be aware that customs may want to treat your net on the return trip. Stonefly Lodge has waders for lodge guests' use as well as Sage rods and reels and, even more importantly, they have studded Simms wading boots. If you were so inclined you could pack shirt, pants,



hat and polaroids, throw in a few flies and tippet material etc and go fishing without any hassle at all back at Aussie customs. This is a great feature the lodge offers for visiting anglers on travel weight restrictions or the not-so-serious visitor just wanting to give fly fishing a try.

### The lodge

I've given the Stonefly Lodge a bigger write up in issue 9 of Flyfisher due out late this year, but a few words here are appropriate. Stonefly Lodge is located approximately 50 minutes drive from Nelson on the South Island of New Zealand. Situated on 150 acres of forested land fronting a sweeping bend on the Motueka River is the reality of a dream that Kate and John have held for many years. Three years of hard labour by the two of them without so much as a small break has seen them only recently open the doors of this spectacular river rock and beamed lodge—very reminiscent of a North American hunting lodge—to the public.

Don't be afraid, however, that you will be eating dinner or playing a game of pool while being stared down upon by dead animal heads or walking on animal hides spread across the floor! That may be appropriate elsewhere but not here, this lodge is understated and friendly with a very warm feeling. Kate and John have a wonderful knack of making you feel comfortable and at home. Have a peek at their website and consider paying them a visit before the word gets out to the point you may be booking twelve months in advance. I can't imagine any angler, or casual visitor for that matter, not being impressed with this newest addition to the New Zealand lodge scene.

