



NOT MISSING
MANY MEALS.

Peacocks of the Rio Marie

The beasts of Brazil come calling BY TOM BIE AND JUSTIN MILLER

RUMORS WERE CIRCULATING throughout the fishosphere by mid-summer. The guys from The Fly Shop had stumbled across something big. Conversations went something like this: “You hear about that place in Brazil where The Fly Shop is sending people?”

“Our fly shop?”

“No, not ‘the fly shop’ (finger quotes), *The Fly Shop*. Michalak’s deal.

“Oh, yeah. I saw some pictures. Those peacocks are huge, dude. *Huge*.”

It’s rare that a new fishery is “discovered.” And unless you’re one of the Motiv Fishing guys, spending a month in the Dorian Gap with a pup tent and a pocket knife, the whole notion of fishing unfished waters sounds farfetched. But the remote nature of the Rio Marie—400 jungle miles northwest of Manaus, near the border of Columbia and Brazil—makes both scenarios believable. Besides, even “small” peacock bass are strong as hell. A 10-pounder is hard to pull out of the sticks. A 15-pounder? Nearly impossible. Over the course of seven weeks, anglers fishing the Rio Marie during its inaugural season landed 40 peacocks over 20 pounds. So I reached out to my friend Justin Miller, who’d been down there, and asked if he could send me a little write-up. Full disclosure: Justin works for The Fly Shop, the booking agent for the Rio Marie. But I knew from traveling and fishing with him that Justin—while exuberant—is also a straight shooter. Before I even read what he had to say, Justin had sent me a string of emails containing nothing but photos of finger burns. Apparently, these bass can do some damage to the digits if you aren’t careful. Here are a few of the thoughts that Justin shared:

- “Some battles I won, and was able to go right back to fishing. Others took a few Skol beers to calm me down and stop my hands from shaking before I was even capable of making another cast.”
- “From broken rods and exploding lines to shredded gloves and line-burnt hands, these peacocks left a path of destruction in their wake. It was everything you could do to hold onto a truly big one long enough to get a picture without something—either gear or body—having a catastrophic failure.”
- “The initial grab of a trophy peacock, and the chaos that ensues, is unimaginable. You cannot let them run—this is what makes the fights so dirty, and often ends with something getting damaged.”
- “One guy hooked a fish so strong that it couldn’t be stopped. As it ripped line away, the other guys in the boat said they could actually smell his skin burning as the line welded his fingers together.”