

Fishing – my joust with a bonefish in Cuba leaves a lasting memory

Keen angler and former Edinburgh publican *Ian Whyte* (pictured) describes a memorable moment from a recent fishing trip to Cuba targeting bonefish.

Riadel, my guide, and I have been walking on the flats for an hour and there was no sign of fish. We are wading slowly so that our feet don't disturb the water. Bonefish can be easily spooked.

Then Riadel whispers: "Bonefish, ten o'clock, 30 metres." I am staring but can't see a fish.

He whispers a second time: "Fish is moving to the left, now 25 metres." I could see nothing in the water which is only 18 inches deep.

Then I see movement. A shape begins to take form. Seconds later I see a fish clearly. Riadel points to where he wants me to land my fly, not too close as it might spook the fish, too far and he won't see it.

You can't put the fly line near the fish, nor can you create a shadow over the fish with the line. The wind is blowing which makes it tricky.

Then Riadel whispers: "Make the cast." I drop the fly then take up the slack with a single haul, trying to keep my rhythm even though my heart is pounding.

No false casting, once back then the forward, cast and

release. The fly lands short. "More left," whispers my guide. I quickly recast, but this time a little too far left.

Riadel orders: "Wait." I stand poised like a heron. The fish moves closer and Riadel says: "Strip tranquilo tranquilo, slowly, slowly."

The fish sees my fly and hunts it down. His mouth opens and I strike. The guide shrieks: "You have him." All hell breaks loose.

The fly line snaps tight, water sprays from it. You remove your fingers from the reel as this ghost of the flats makes for the horizon.

My reel screams in protest as the fish moves up a gear. In seconds he is 100 yards away, the speed is electrifying.

Everything you may have read or heard is true. These bonefish are, without doubt, one of the fastest fish you can hook on a fly rod but, after another two streaking runs, he's mine.

I glide him into the hands of the guide, the hook is removed and I hold the fish for a few seconds for a photograph (see above) then he is released back into the surf to fight another day.