



**W**E had stopped for lunch on a remote Okavango island after a potential catfish run had been found during the morning session. The camp was promptly set up with canvas bed rolls, inflatable mattresses, mosquito nets and the simplicity they offered being the order of the day. A good pile of firewood was easily collected, fold-up tables erected and the bare essentials carried off the boat.

While a pot of coffee was brewed to chase a good lunch, leaders were retied and fly-boxes restocked. Everyone was smiling with banter spurring on the high spirits in the camp. It was the golden hour of the evening that was on everyone's lips. We were camping on a remote island on the Okavango River, far from our lodge, with a good catfish run building momentum within a stone's throw from our fly camp. Perhaps the reason for the boyish laughter was that everyone knew the potential that evening held. They knew that when the light faded and the tigerfish were attacking the flies at fever pitch, we were going to be the only anglers with a line in the water.

The Okavango River spills into the northwestern corner of Botswana, after a long journey through the Caprivi Strip of Namibia and the catchment area within Angola, known locally as Kanvango and Cubango respectively. Although the river travels for many hundreds of kilometres before entering Botswana, a truly remarkable event occurs when the rising waters reach the flood plains of the Okavango Delta.

There is a marginal elevation difference between Shakawe, in the north of the panhandle, and Maun, some 400km away. With very little gradient, the flooding water creates a seemingly endless area of lagoons, winding rivers, oxbow lakes, floodplains and papyrus fields. The area is vast and at its largest covers a staggering 16 000 square kilometres.

Considering the perfect nursery these flood waters provide for juvenile and small fish species, one can hardly comprehend the volume of potential tigerfish fodder that thrives

Sunset on the Okavango, and it's prime tiger time (left). There's no need to hurry home to a lodge either, as the camp is but a few minutes' ride away. On another occasion, it's a quick photo before release (top right); fly-camping on an Okavango island (right centre); and the cause of all the fishing mahem in the first place, the Okavango catfish (right).

