



**W**E had been looking for roughly two hours — up and down we drove. They were new to the neighbourhood and wanted their fix. They deserved it! I knew the area and was under pressure to supply “the stuff”. The night before we had met a group of

ing river, the margins were alive with thrashing barbel, at times flaying hopelessly on the backs of their brethren as they forged upstream.

Darren Williams and Jennifer Bailey from the USA had been waiting for this. I was ecstatic — and relieved — having primed them for the upcoming action.

respectively. With heart beats rising in tempo with the shuddering papyrus, the couple shot out their first casts up and across. Giving time for their D17 lines to get down, they let their lines swing through 90 degrees before commencing a steady strip retrieve.

Jen got her first hit almost immediately and was soon followed by her husband, Darren. Being an addict myself, I can tell you the effects are felt at the first prick of the needlesharp point. That jab sends the tigerfish off in a spirited dash for freedom, while adrenaline-laced blood is shunted through the angler’s veins faster than the backing peeling off the reel. Fishing the barbel run had begun in earnest!

Each year the Okavango River in western Botswana plays host to one of Africa’s finest sportfishing spectacles — the catfish run. Anytime from mid-September through to mid-November (and some years as late as December) the delta’s barbel congregate in immense numbers and a mass upstream

# MAINLINE TIGERS

## Get your fix in the Okavango

addicts who had found a good supply of it, and were still on a high hours later. I heard the commotion from around the corner, a sure sign of a deal going down. We rounded a bend and there it was ...

The egrets were everywhere, taking up their position on opposite banks, a stark contrast to the slithering, brown mass of barbel under their feet. Fish eagles swooped in on the action.

Dropping anchor roughly 30 metres before the leading bunch, Darren and Jen took their places on the bow and stern of the boat

pilgrimage occurs. The driving force behind this behaviour is commonly believed to be the need to spawn.

There are, however, many aspects to the catfish run that are not fully understood. What determines the size of an individual run? What sparks a run in the first place? What factors contribute to the length of a run? Where do the fish end up? What causes a run to disperse?

These are all questions that are yet to be confidently answered. Water levels, water temperature, availability of suitable baitfish, micro catfish



The occasional swirl and slash of a crocodile and red flash of a tigerfish’s tail were indications of the mayhem taking place below. We had hit it big time! As far as we could see down the meander-

All the way from Jackson in Wyoming, USA, Darren Williams savoured African tiger fishing at its very best during the catfish run.