

MARCH TARPON/PERMIT TRIP REPORT

BELIZE TRIP DIARY – RISING TIDE MOTHERSHIP, MARCH 8 – 15, 2010

Marte and Don Muelrath, Frank Jackson

Keys to report:

- Shifts identified as 1st (6:00am til breakfast at 9:00 or 9:30); 2nd from after breakfast til lunch around 2:00 or 3:00; 3rd from 4:30 til dark
- 2 skiffs out with one angler each during 1st and 3rd shift. During 2nd shift, both anglers in same skiff while second skiff used for snorkeling with Noel as snorkeling guide.

Arrival eve – Decided to commit first 3 days with a focus of getting Frank his first med to large tarpon. Capt Dean thought our odds of doing that would be strongest fishing around mainland, near Belize City. Had seen many large fish in early morning and evening rolling around the river mouth. Anchored at Sugar Bogue so Marte would be close to Gallows Point for snorkeling and we could reach mainland.

1st day – winds med heavy, part cloudy

1st: river mouth, just below Haulover Bridge and above it – lots cast to lots of big (to 100+ #) rolling fish....no hookups

2nd: 25 minutes with single 15# permit at back part of Fowler – came to fly twice.....eat???

Snook in mangroves – no eat. Marte snorkeled on reef, just north of Gallows Point snorkeling area. Very good snorkeling.

3rd: move RT back nearer mainland since it was apparent we were going to fish the tarpon in river mouth for a few days.....eve, lots of large (50 to 100+ pounders) rolling fish again, fished through dark, same places in river as the morn.....couldn't get an eat.

2nd day – winds med, part cloudy

1st – left early, 5:40. In river mouth, feeding frenzy. Tarpon literally slashing the surface everywhere, all around the boat. Fish of 40, 50, 60, 80, some over 100...one fish could have been 150. At any one moment, we could see three different fish on surface – could actually pick my target. Frenzy lasted about 30-40 min. Could have ended when tide went slack, but not sure that was the reason. Could not get an eat – just not typical of Belize fish. Tried 4 different flies – have Florida fish migrated down?? What's the deal??? Got 6# catfish – tarpon no eat.

2nd – Frank 3 ladyfish, bone, and jack. Backside of Fowlers. Had another permit follow. Saw 2 big snook, bone, and 2 permit, all with wrong rod in hand.....had all three rods out and ready as we were seeing all three species.

3rd – back to rolling tarpon in river mouth...this time we brought spinning rod to see if we could get them to eat something.....lots of big rolling fish.....puzzle continues.....couldn't even get an eat on the Mirro-lure with the spin rod???

3rd day – light-med winds, no clouds

1st - Frank.....casting to a rolling fish very near the boat.....he saw the roll, he cast, and watched him engulf the fly.....20 feet away.....and he exploded out of the water, full 5.5 feet long, showered the boat on his first jump. First tarpon besides baby tarpon for Frank. 80# tarpon released at boat after 45 minutes. Frank also picked up 6# snook on way in for breakfast

2nd – Frank needs bonefish to complete IGFA inshore Grand Slam– tide is falling and very low . . . fish scarce . . . found two and got second for Grand Slam in under 10 casts!!!! Special day for Frank.....Moved the Rising Tide south to Robinson Point during lunch to fish permit

3rd – evening at Robinson – heavy cloud cover – could only see moving water or tails. 7 sightings, 3 good shots, 1 response.

4th day

Morning – heavy fog and west wind. Fog didn't burn off til after 9:00. Day turned classic.....light wind and no clouds.

1st – 12 sightings, 5 shots, Frank got his 6th permit – 6#.....Frank actually had a Super Grand Slam if we count a consecutive 26 hour period.

2nd – 15+ sightings, 9 shots, Don got his 27th – 8#

3rd – 8 sightings, 5 shots, Don got his 28th – 4#

Eve was calm with strong west wind developing late – appears a front moving in – moving fish or tails easy to spot. Total for day – 35+ sightings, 19 shots, 3 fish

Front arrives during the night.

5th day – cool in morning (Noel in 3 layers) with med heavy wind from NW – cloud cover burned off by breakfast and warmed.

1st – only 2 sightings, one shot.

2nd – 3 sightings, 3 shots, 1 fish tailed on fly

3rd – 1 sighting, 1 shot, and Frank got his 7th permit....12# est

Overall, low numbers today due to front and strange winds reducing tidal flows.

6th day – heavy cloud cover, slate gray surface on water, winds light from south.

1st – lots of fish on flats.....total for both skiffs - 19 sightings, 14 shots – 0 fish

2nd – winds light, skies partly cloudy.....5 sightings, 3 shots

Moved during lunch back to marina to fish evening near city for tarpon.

3rd – drew 5 snook out of mangroves, got one to boat. As sun got nearer the horizon, we moved to river mouth. During the next 90 minutes, saw lots of rolling fish (over 50) in river mouth – some tailing.....big fish of 40 – 100+ pounds. Had many opportunities to cast to nose of roller, but no hook-ups....what is the deal??? Frank did get a few 5-6# catfish on his tarpon fly.

Did see a very large shrimp (6+ inches long) skipping on surface – wonder if the big tarpon are here (big tarpon have been seen tailing and presumably eating the big shrimp off the bottom many times in past years near the mainland) in the early part of the year to feed on these shrimp?? Possible explanation (and admittedly only speculation on my part) is that the large shrimp are in this location for some purpose (to spawn??) in the early months of the year and attract the large tarpon.....and the tarpon get honed in on feeding on them and are very selective.....certainly, during the course of this trip, we had flies which are usually eaten without hesitation by Belize tarpon (dumb, unpressured fish) in front of fish over and over in the early morning and late evening with only one eat ‘til now.

7th day – we had the early flight out and only had til 8:00am on the river to try one more time for a big tarpon. We examined all our shrimp patterns and the largest we had were about 2.5 inches long and nothing in white, the color of these giant shrimp. We settled on trying a large white deceiver type fly – the longest we had was about 4 inches long – and fished it with short, shrimp type strips. 6:00am we set off for the river mouth. Fish were rolling just like “usual.” Frank got a hook up casting to nose of big roller, about 80#.....several spectacular jumps, but the fly pulled loose after about 15 minutes. He did land a jack crevalle on the same tarpon fly. Then, I finally had a tarpon eat, another 70-80# fish, but pulled loose quickly.

The number of rolling fish began to slow and Dean said it was 8:00 o’clock and time to leave to finish packing and make our flight. We reeled up, put our reel covers on, and Dean reached to start the motor.....and noticed a roller about 30 feet from boat.....I grabbed the rod and flung the fly in that direction and it was engulfed followed by a spectacular series of 8 to 10 leaps clear of the water. Hot fish....three times in the next hour, we had him to within a few feet of having the leader at the rod tip and he pulled away. At 9:00, as if to say, “if you don’t leave now, you will miss your flight,” the fly line separated about 6 feet from the fly, just above the connection to the butt section – the tail had probably been rubbing on it for the past hour and had frayed it.

Made the plane as boarding was taking place - could still be in the river chasing that fish without the early release. We only saw one other fisherman, for about 10 minutes, during our entire week.

