

## CAMPECHE BABY TARPON REPORT - JOHN SHIELDS

Don,

Unfortunately, the tarpon trip was sub par, over four days we jumped 20 tarpon, catching 10, plus one nice snook. On Thursday and Saturday, we saw only a few fish, and caught only one 2-3 lb-er by dangling a fly six feet away in a small creek. Our major problem was the weather, as a cold front blew in the day we arrived, with 25-30 Mile per hour winds from the North, chilling the water and pushing the water deep into the mangroves along with the tarpon. According to Cody, the outfitter, it was his worst trip since he started the operation, although a group of six, ten days before had similar weather, and only slightly better fishing. His next group does not arrive until Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, and from the first of March, he is booked through May.

While the fishing was very slow, the accommodations were outstanding, some of the best I have ever seen on a fishing trip, the town of Campeche is fascinating, clean and safe, and historic. Cody is an enthusiastic and capable outfitter, and has done a nice job in setting up the experience. He joined us every day, including his lead guide, Neco. Cody has a good understanding of the area and how to fish to the tarpon when they are available. As Cody was with us the whole time, we did not get a good understanding of the skills of the guide, but he has very little English. In fact, the town of Campeche is not "English speaking" as there is very little tourist trade, and only a very few Americans live there.

We spent a lot of time discussing the experience with Cody, who is a very close friend, of one of my old fishing guides, who also happens to be a good friend of Chet's son, who is also a fishing guide in Colorado. He needs to improve the pre trip data, could easily supply the right fly's and leaders, which are different than those easily bought a fly shops, needs to determine a method to catch the many snook we saw on the flats, which refused the vast number of good presentations we made to them, needs to develop a back up activity for bad weather, he can offer many more activities through the Hotel, etc.

We ate at the Hotel two nights, and out one other. I would have gone out another night in retrospect, as the food in the small restaurants was outstanding.

While we were disappointed in the fishing, the experience was fun, and I believe with the right conditions, would be an outstanding trip. Catching the small tarpon on a 7 wt. rod was fun, and the rod of choice for the small fly's we found effective, additionally we found the need to lengthen our leader to about 10 ft., and go down in tippet size to avoid spooking the fish, especially the snook.

I would be reluctant to do this trip again in Jan/Feb, as the weather risk is too high. Additionally, I would seek a period of greater tidal change, as we had slack tides, and the fish did not seem to come out in slack water as the bait was not concentrated or moving.

John

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