

TARPON EXCITEMENT SHOULD CONTINUE IN JULY

We are at the time of year that creates much speculation regarding the remainder of tarpon season at Boca Grande. Will tarpon remain or leave soon to head offshore for spawning, not to return again until next April?

That is a big question and certainly one that is on the mind of every local captain. In past years, prior to the mid 1990's, tarpon fishing at Boca Grande was dependable all the way into mid or late July, with plenty of charter customers wanting to schedule a trip. In fact, many guides fished into August, with good results.

However, since that time, boat traffic in the way of noisy outboards has increased many, many times. This additional underwater high pitch scream, plus the adverse fishing method by the same angler group of running from one pod of surface fish to another has created much stress to the tarpon. Their environment here is much like the very busiest airport in the country with no traffic controllers to regulate what's happening. Sounds like a perfect formula for "chaos"...and, that is exactly what we now experience every day of tarpon season at the pass...pure chaos.

For inboard powered tarpon boats fishing the pass, there are no more today than in past years. In fact, there are less. We're speaking of traditional tarpon fishing that is not disruptive to the fishery by way of improper boat operation, plus they incorporate the use of low pitch inboard engines that do not impact the tarpon's primitive hearing system such as the outboard engines do, especially when outboard powered boats are revved up to continuously run from one pod of fish to another.

Back to the issue...how long will our tarpon remain this year? We are presently approaching new moon spring tides next week leading into the July 4th weekend and it should produce great days of fishing with eager tarpon taking advantage of the hard falling tides and outflow of pass crabs. However, this very well may be the exit period for what tarpon remain. The next week or so will tell the tale. How long tarpon will remain at the pass after this next set of spring tides is only a guess.

Here's the good news. In spite of the increased boating activity at the pass, daytime fishing has seen a resurgence during the past few years. Traditional live bait tarpon tournaments during 2008 have all been very successful. In addition, the month of July during the past several seasons, has also rebounded to produce great results after the mainstream of boating activity has ended. Last year and the year before, guides were busy catching tarpon with late season customers right into August.

What will be? Will the new moon in July next week, characterized by days of strong spring tides, signal the end of tarpon fishing for this year or will enough tarpon remain to give anglers the action they deserve? Bet on the remainder of July being good. In fact, bet on July being great! Plus, Boca Grande Pass will be a much quieter and peaceful

environment. The key worry relative to continued good fishing will be what happens with weather. That will be a question answered only by time.