

Fort Lauderdale Lunker Report - Tarpon Tricks That Work

Winter is coming to an end and the days are getting longer and warmer. This means that the inshore fishing will start to heat up. Although our peak tarpon season is the second half of May and the beginning of June we start fishing for them now. There are three basic strategies that have worked for inshore fishing guides over the years and I am sure they will work for you.

Big schools of tarpon have started staging in front of the three most southern inlets, Port Everglades, Haulover, and Government Cut. Fishing for them can often get frustrating as they tend to have "lock jaw" and often do not eat. Do not let them fool you they will eat but timing has much to do with it. It is important not to fish in the middle of the tide when water is really moving fast, but rather plan your trips at the end of the tides. Fast moving water often make the tarpon huddle on the bottom. This makes it extremely hard to get your bait down in front of them in a natural manner. Shrimp and crabs are the most effective bait when fishing these inlets, but having a natural presentation is the key to getting them to eat your bait. It is extremely important that your baits drift with the current naturally making sure they are not pulling or spinning against it. Using light leader and light weights are the key. I like a 6 foot 50lb monofilament leader tied directly to the line with no swivel or hardware. Then I use split shots to modify the weight accordingly. When putting the split shot on the leader get it as far away from the bait as you can so the bait can swing around naturally. Bobbers are also needed so when you are drifting you can set your baits at different depths. Having the right hook is a big deal if you want to get the fish to the boat for a nice photo. I use a 5/0 Eagle Claw L2222G circle hook, that way once I have my baits out I can leave the rods in the holders and just wait for the rod to bend over and they will be on.

Other inshore fishing action will start as well. Snook will start to eat more as the water warms and should gather in rivers, canal mouths and locks. Most tarpon guides and snook guides here in Fort Lauderdale and Miami have found salt water fishing to be better in afternoons and have proved to be much more productive as the water warms during the day. Mangrove snapper and lady fish will also be in good numbers through the ICW.

Reef fishing will remain strong. King fish and mackerel will be in shallow between 80 and 35 feet of water. Sail fishing will still be the thing to do until May rolls around these fish will often get shallow this time of year so you may want to get your lines in around 45 feet and make your way out. Dolphin and tuna will start to show more consistently out a little deeper and should add some action to your days.

Way offshore daytime sword fishing will still be the topic. Swordfish have always eaten well during the spring and I would bet on it again this year. The future of this fishery is again in jeopardy as there are now three long lining vessel allowed to work in our waters and numerous buoy boats. I mention this only to make the sport fisherman aware that if things keep heading in this direction our sword fishery could be very short lived.

I like this time of the year because fishing can get really consistent so get out there and give it your best. Please login into to the lunkerblog and our fishing videos on youtube.

Good Luck and be careful.

Capt Jeff Maggio.

About the Author

Capt Jeff is USCG licensed Captain that knows how to target the right fish during the right season. His fishing knowledge was actually inherited from his father Joe Maggio (Founder and owner of Salt Shaker Custom Yachts) moving to Las Olas Blvd. during 1977 after 4 seasons of Giant Bluefin fishing out of Cape Ann Gloucester MA. Capt Jeff has been fishing Ft Lauderdale since 1977 and still lives and fishes downtown [Ft. Lauderdale](#) today. To book a trip with Capt Jeff visit his web site [LunkerDog.com](#) or give him a call 954-764-2506.

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