

Research Report

Tarpon and Bonefish Tagging

Belize River Lodge, March 24-29, 2010

El Pescador lodge, April 9-19, 2010

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Belize River Lodge

Aaron Adams, traveling with Mike Larkin of the University of Miami, and four recreational anglers, arrived at Belize River Lodge on March 24. The goal was to place satellite tags on three adult tarpon captured in or near the Belize River. Three adult tarpon were tagged on this trip:

March 25 – 85 pound tarpon, satellite tag #133; scheduled pop-off date August 1, 2010

March 26 – 95 pound tarpon, satellite tag #141; scheduled pop-off date September 1, 2010

March 28 – 105 pound tarpon, satellite tag #138; scheduled pop-off date August 15, 2010

These were the first tarpon satellite tagged in Belize.

Unfortunately, after eight days, tag #133 detached from the tarpon and floated to the surface. Similarly, tag #141 detached from the tarpon nine days after tagging. Both tags were retrieved from mangroves at the mouth of the Belize River by staff at Belize River Lodge, and returned to University of Miami where their data were analyzed. Despite the tags detaching early from the tarpon, some valuable data were obtained (see attached report).

It is assumed that both tags detached from the fish because the fish did not change depths and stayed in relatively shallow water. The computer in each tag is conventionally programmed to interpret a lack of depth change to mean that the fish had died, which causes the tag to detach itself from the fish. For future tagging in Belize, tags will be programmed to remain on the fish even if the fish remains in shallow water. Because the data from the tags showed constant movement by the tarpon, we are certain that they lived.

El Pescador

Aaron Adams, traveling in conjunction with an Orvis-arranged fly fishing trip, accompanied twelve recreational anglers to El Pescador lodge. While at the lodge, he gave a presentation on bonefish and tarpon research to the anglers and to El Pescador guides, and trained the guides and anglers how to tag bonefish. During the 10 day trip, more than 60 bonefish were tagged. Guides were enthusiastic about the tagging program, and vowed to continue tagging bonefish throughout the year. El Pescador lodge will add to their orientation for anglers: education about best practices for bonefish catch and release; and information about the bonefish tagging program.