Tarpon Sub-Adult to Adult

Sub-adult tarpon are like teenagers. They look like an adult. They act like an adult sometimes, but they are still not an adult yet. A tarpon this age looks just like an adult tarpon but still acts like young tarpon. They are big fish that can start to swim into new places, and eat new things. They explore open areas away from the mangroves and even swim into the open ocean. At this life stage they eat crabs, fish, shrimp and worms.

Scientists do not think that sub-adult tarpon migrate and that they generally stay close to the area where they spent their juvenile stage.

Sub-adult tarpon are big fish, but they will still grow a lot more once they become adults.

HABITAT	LOOKS	FOOD			
Mangrove community	Visually look like adult tarpon	Shrimp	Fish	Worms	Crabs

Fishermen in Florida love tarpon because they are huge fish that are hard to catch. They also jump high out of the water while being caught.

Adult Tarpon

Two of the most impressive things about tarpon are their great size and long life! They grow to more than 200 pounds and can live over 80 years. That is amazing for a fish and also is part of why they are such important fish to protect and preserve. Tarpon have been swimming in oceans since the dinosaurs roamed our planet, so it is our job to make sure these "silver kings" can continue to spawn, grow and eventually spawn again.

Tarpon take years to reach maturity. For a tarpon, true adult maturity is the point in their life when they are able to make the long

journey offshore and spawn. Adult tarpon spawn in the open ocean where there is not much food nor many places to hide. This journey can be dangerous because they are swimming long distances through habitats of many predators, such as sharks, barracudas and other large fish.

Another danger of this long journey is the possibility of being caught by an angler. In Florida, tarpon are not caught for food but instead are caught and released as a fun sport. Tarpon are very fun to fish for because they fight as hard as they can, and make big leaps into the air. All this fighting makes the tarpon really tired, and sometimes the fishermen can hurt the tarpon by picking it up or taking it out of the water for too long. A tired or hurt tarpon has a harder time swimming, which can make it easier for predators to catch and eat the tarpon. If a fisherman is careful, tarpon fishing doesn't have to be deadly. There are lots of things that fishermen do to make sure their tarpon swim away healthy.

Even big tarpon are in danger if they are let go when big sharks are around.

Some fishermen use circle hooks while fishing. These hooks take some practice to use but they help ensure that the fish doesn't get "gut hooked", meaning the fish doesn't swallow the hook so deep that it catches its stomach. Because the hook is rounded, it pulls out of the throat and hooks on the side of the mouth instead of inside the stomach.
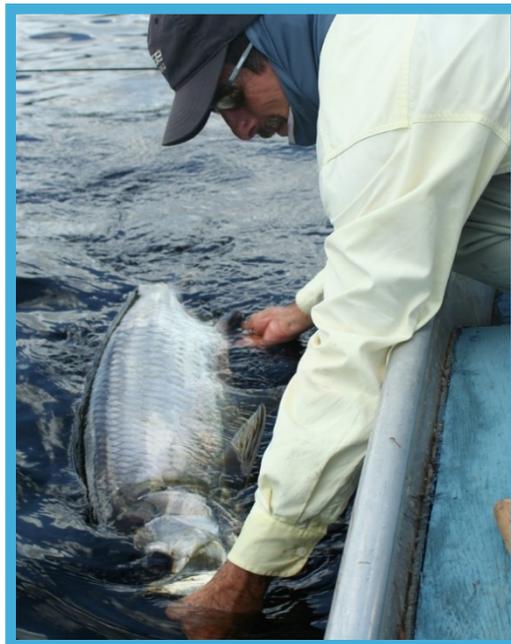

Circle hooks are most likely to hook the lip of the mouth, instead of deep in the belly where the hook is hard to take out safely.

Many fishermen try to reel in their tarpon as fast as they can once they have hooked it. If you fight a tarpon for too long, it will get too tired to swim away after it is let go. Fighting a tarpon for a long time also makes a lot of splashing and noise that will bring predators like sharks to the area. Sharks can eat the fish while it is still on the line and unable to escape. This ruins a day of fishing.

Many fishermen try to keep tarpon in the water next to the boat instead of holding it up. They will pull it up next to the boat and drive the boat slowly so that water is entering the mouth (and flowing across the gills) so they can take a good photo. Taking the tarpon out of the water makes it hard for the fish to breathe, but also, it is really easy to hurt the body of a tarpon by holding it.

All of these practices help the tarpon swim away in good health after it is released. You can make a big difference in a tarpon's health if you keep these things in mind when you go fishing.