

ZAMBEZI QUEEN COLLECTION

BY MANTIS

FISHING THE CHOBE RIVER AND ZAMBEZI RIVER FOR TIGER FISH AND OTHER SPECIES

WHAT MAKES TIGER FISHING IN OUR WATERS SO FAMOUS?

The Chobe area has a unique geographical location that allows boat access to over 100 kilometres of prime water on the famed Chobe and Zambezi Rivers and the many productive waterways found in between. This eastern Zambezi Region (formerly Caprivi) is also the home of extensive floodplains and the breeding area of a multitude of fish species, some of which are caught on fly and spinner.

The diverse habitats provide year-round fishing in the area. Only in January and February when the water can become discoloured is flyfishing affected but the variety of water habitats provides many opportunities throughout the year to experience catching the hard-fighting tiger fish.

From the deep wide upper Zambezi and the meandering Chobe, through the well-known Mambova and Chobe rapids with their shallow gravel beds and through the small channels and backwaters, each habitat offers its own unique challenges. There is something for everyone – beginner and experienced angler alike. While the undoubted champion of the area is the tiger fish which grows to 20 lbs. in these waters, there is an enviable array of ‘bream’ species, catfish, African pike and upper Zambezi yellowfish that draw anglers to the region .

It is the annual flood in January and February that swells the Chobe and Zambezi, saturating the surrounding floodplains and rejuvenating the fish numbers. These few months of high water allows fish to breed in massive numbers, thus replenishing the fish population for the year ahead.

Once the water starts receding from the floodplains, incredible numbers of minnows and small baitfish are flushed back into the main channels which is an event welcomed by tiger fish who take full advantage. For this reason, fishing is not only excellent in the traditional summer months but has spectacular ‘frenzies’ in winter.

Our “Fishing Calendar” below provides more detail as to the expectations of each month:



FISHING CALENDAR—WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO FISHING?

Month	River Conditions	Species	Technique
October	The main catchment area for the Zambezi River is in western Zambia and every year their big rains begin at the end of October. The Zambezi River rises slowly but there is very little discernible change around Ichingo with fishing good in the low, warm clear water. Flyfishing is particularly effective in the Chobe rapids.	Tigerfish, Catfish,	Flyfishing, spinning.
November	Local rains begin and the fishing conditions take advantage of the oxygen being fed into the system. Flyfishing and drift-bait fishing is productive especially in the faster water.	Tigerfish, Catfish,	Flyfishing . spinning, drift fishing
December	Most sunny days are cooled of by short thundershowers in mid-afternoon. Towards month end the river begins to rise and spills into the lower lying floodplains. Baitfish move onto these flooded areas to feed and breed. However the stronger currents in the main channel, provide excellent tiger fishing - drift-baiting being particularly good.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing . spinning, drift fishing
January	In addition to frequent localised thundershower activity, the main flow of water from Angola and northern Zambia begin to flush the Impalila area. The rivers become cloudy in appearance. Despite the discoloration of the water great sport can be had using spinners in cleaner areas where the reed beds have filtered the water. Summer bream are also found in these reeds and fishing with weighted jigs and spinner-baits can be rewarding.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing, spinning
February	There is a marked increase in the water levels and waterways such as the Kasai become deeper and faster (even changing direction of flow!) providing some excellent fishing opportunities.	Tigerfish, Catfish,	Drift-baiting, Trolling
March	Local rains ease off but the higher waters allow for exploration in productive areas that are usually too shallow and rocky to navigate. The flow of the water in the main streams is fast but there are many back eddies etc which create interesting fishing. Flyfishing in the rapids is exhilarating and can produce surprising results	Tigerfish, Catfish,	Drift fishing, spinning.
April	This month marks the beginning of Autumn for us and the temperatures begin to drop. There is still great fishing to be had in the smaller channels and in the rapids sections. The first of the winter bream species, such as the much sought-after nembwe and humpback largemouth bream are more active along the deeper sections of the floodplain.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Drift fishing, spinning
May	Officially the end of the rainy season and May also marks the turning point when the river ceases to rise and begins to recede. The baitfish exit the relative safety of the floodplains and move into the main channels. This provides excellent hunting grounds for the tiger fish which take advantage of the depth and speed of the water to feast on the bounty coming back into the system. Flyfishing and spinning come into their own.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing , spin fishing, drift fishing
June	Lovely balmy weather prevails. A superb time to be on the water. The baitfish are entering the channels in their multitudes with the receding warm water. Tigers and other predator species concentrate on any 'dribble' off the floodplain. Flyfishing is excellent as is spin fishing.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing, spin fishing
July	Although the river level is receding and new areas of the floodplain can be seen every day, the water is still very deep and strong and the superb floodplains fishing conditions continue with frenzies a distinct possibility.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing, spinning.
August	The water levels noticeably drop and the floodplain to the west of Impalila Island dries up, forcing the last of the minnows and barbus species into the Kasai channel. At the same time, the greatly awaited catfish congregations begin prior to spawning and they search out the vast food resources now suddenly available to them, making for an unforgettable fishing phenomenon. Tiger fishing is also very good at this time as the concentrations of barbel create feeding frenzies	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing, spinning.
September	The water levels are now very clear and low. The water is warm but the surrounding Chobe rapids and the channels of the lower Mambova areas with their oxygen provide yet another wonderful opportunity for flyfishers who can fish the shallow rocky areas.	Tigerfish, Catfish, Bream	Flyfishing, spinning.

EQUIPMENT

Tender Boats

- We operate the largest fleet of tender boats in the area allowing a maximum of 3 anglers per boat if conventional fishing and 2 anglers if flyfishing.
- Our local guides are very knowledgeable of the area, the habitats and fishing techniques and will assist you in every way possible when out on the water.
- Each boat is well maintained and has a 60 HP engine and we offer unlimited fuel.

Flyfishing Equipment

This is a world-class flyfishing destination for Tigerfish and, throughout the year, the diverse waters in the Chobe area provide a number of opportunities to land a 'striped water dog' on fly – perhaps even a monster. Until relatively recently the Tigerfish was regarded as a summer fish caught only in the months with an "R" in them, but over the last decade, this has proved to be a misconception. Now many flyfishers flock to the area from June - August to experience the floodplains fishing and the "barbel runs".

Nevertheless, the summer months, with the exception of January /February, when the river is discoloured, are good times to fish on fly and many of the biggest tigers (up to 20 lb) are often caught at this time of year.

All of our properties provide guests with fishing equipment – both conventional and fly – but for those that are wanting to bring some of their own the below is a guideline as to what works best in our area:

Flyline	Rods	Reel	Flies
An extra fast sinking line as well as an intermediate line	An 8/9 weight rod	A competent reel with a disc drag system and capacity for min 100 m of backing	Deceivers, Streamers, Clouser minnows. 2/0 hook, Colours: black/red/chartreuse/flash. Leaders are traditionally 20 lb mono and piano wire for the wire trace

Conventional Fishing Equipment

Artificial Lures

- Rapalas* Countdown, Super Shadrap, Husky, Fat Raps, Floating Magnums
Spinners Effzett Spoons, Spinner Bait , MEPPS
Jigs Weighted and weedless

Rods

- Stiff eight foot Tiger rod with a 4000 reel holding 12 kg line
Medium action 6 foot 6" Bream rod with a 2000/2500 reel holding 5 kg line

Other

- Bogagrip
Long – 18 inch traces
5/0 hooks for drifting
- Flies are available for sale in the Lodge