

# Timing the Palolo worm hatch for maximum tarpon action in the Keys

The full moon in May or June is the best time of the year for silver kings in The Keys

May and June is the tarpon time of the year. It's the time of the year when you find the fish migrating south, looking for the famous Palolo worm hatch.

The first thing you should understand when we're talking about the Palolo worm hatch is there are actually several of them. Not just one. But the major ones are at the Seven-Mile Bridge and the Bahia Honda Bridge, usually around the full moon in May or June. That, of course, depends on whether the moon is full in the early part of the month or later on.



If the full moon is at the end of May, you're most likely going to have the conditions that will allow the worms to go off at that time. I've seen in past years where we've had bad conditions in early May and, despite the fact there was a full moon, the worms held out until the first week of June, during that full moon.

The full moon in May was on the 9th, so there is a good chance the worms will wait until around June 7 when it gets back to full again. Maybe. Maybe not.

What I'm getting at is the hatch is not set

in stone. The conditions are the only reasons those worms decide to hatch and, as we've proven over and over again, humans are terrible at predicting conditions.

There are three things that play into the worms hatching and those are water temperature, air temperature and the amount of humidity. When I think of tarpon fishing in the summer, I think of humidity and those worms must like the same thing.

If you're a fly fisherman, the best thing you can do during this hatch is set up on the oceanside flats, or in the backcountry, and wait for the fish to come by. Have your favorite Keys guide pole you down the

edges of the flats and be on the lookout for fish rolling.

If you're fishing for tarpon and using bait, my suggestion is to go to some of the deeper channels and set up shop there. I'm thinking major tarpon holes like the Channels 2 and 5, the Seven-Mile Bridge and the Bahia Honda Bridge. These are the places you tend to have the biggest concentrations of fish.

You're going to be using pinfish or mullet for bait in these areas. Whereas, if you were to toss a pinfish or a mullet out on the flats, you would most likely get a refusal. The tarpon are using those flats as a highway and migrating down through The

Keys. The erratic craziness of a pinfish or a mullet on a hook freaks them out. A guy with a fly, however, stands a much better shot at hooking on the flats.

The outgoing tide in the afternoon, around 5 or 6 p.m., in conjunction with the full moon is the ideal time to be on the water this time of year.

But remember, it all has to do with when the worms want to hatch, the worms are going to hatch. Nobody has ever been able to pinpoint when it is going to happen within two or three days.

The key is to be on the water when the worms make their decision.

**TIP OF THE WEEK** By Capt. Rick Murphy

*Rick Murphy is the Host of Sportsman's Adventures and Chevy Florida Report.*

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## World's largest kayak fishing tourney nets \$43,000 for charities

The 2009 Columbia Sportswear Kayak Fishing Classic drew 430 anglers in Jacksonville and raised more than \$43,000 for Daniel Kids and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation. The catch-photo-release charity event, run by JaxKayakFishing.com, is the world's largest kayak fishing event for the fourth consecutive year.

Roger Bump of Jacksonville claimed the top prize for the second year in a row in the slam division, winning a fully-rigged Hobie Mirage Pro Angler fishing kayak. He found all his fish in the Mill Cove area en route to his record-setting 69.8-inch winning slam, which consisted of a 27-inch redfish, a 26-inch trout, and a 16.7-inch flounder. Bump was closely followed by Jacksonville's Robert Murray with 65.75 inches, Jon Ward of Riverview with 60.5 inches, Jacksonville's Adam Boyd with 60.1 inches, and Daniel Hunter of Jacksonville with 58.8 inches.

Erick Bell, a member of Team Wilderness Systems from Concord, North Carolina, won the trout division with a personal best 27.65-inch gator trout. Bell then donated his first place prize Ocean Kayak Trident to raise more funds for Florida's oldest children's services organization.

For more results and information about next year's Classic visit Jacksonville's kayak fishing community at [www.jaxkayakfishing.com](http://www.jaxkayakfishing.com).