

## **CATCH AND RELEASE COSTA RICA - CIRCLE HOOK SPORTFISHING**

With ecology a prime factor now, many have asked, "What is being done to preserve our fishing?" Costa Rica is one of the pioneers in preserving big game fishing.

### **CIRCLE HOOK vs J-HOOK**

Starting in the early 80s, sport fishing captains that moved to Costa Rica started to revolutionize the idea of substituting the standard J hook to that of a Circle Hook. The main problem with a "J" hook is, it usually allows the fish to swallow the bait (or gut hooked) and causes a lot of trauma to the fish. Evidence of this is seen when fish jumped with a halo of misty blood around it as it coughs blood or pieces of its stomach. Years ago this was 'somewhat acceptable' if you're going to keep the fish. However, that has changed as long-term ecology became more of a concern; what if you intend to release the fish? Or what if the hook rips from the fish's mouth (spitting the hook) or the line snaps with a jig inside, no doubt over time the billfish would die!

Who started the practice of fishing with humane concerns or Catch and Release in Costa Rica? There is an array of captains who claim they did, but captains like Randy Wilson (Tamarindo) captain of the Talking Fish, and Bill Gannon (Quepos) Captain of the Unique, who came to Costa Rica in the late 70s extensively helped conserve the game fish in Costa Rica by developing their own techniques and lures in the 80's. These have been refined over the years to ensure proper handling of sailfish and marlin during hookup, fight and most importantly, started to master the skill of catch and release.

It was also quickly discovered that circle hooks also radically reduced incidences of foul-hooked fish another common occurrence when trolling. The J hook, will often hook the fish elsewhere on the body, such as on the shoulder, dorsal fin, face (the eye socket is common area) or on the belly. The hook snags practically anywhere and anything. Many an angler have requiring surgery to remove the hook, and many have lost an eye. The design of the circle hook with the semi-protected point makes it less prone to damage the fish or cause injury to an angler if the fish spits the hook.

In a recent comparison study that was conducted in Itapúa, Guatemala, circle vs. J-hooks with both live and dead bait on sailfish, a total of 360 Pacific sailfish were caught with 235 on circle hooks and 125 on J-hooks. Only one sailfish was foul hooked using circle hooks. Sailfish caught on "J" hooks are 21 times more likely to suffer hook-related bleeding than those caught on circle hooks. Circle hooks reduced the mortality rate of bill fish by 98%.

Under presser to preserve the sport fishing industry, the Costa Rican Institute of Fish and Aquaculture passed a bill requiring sport anglers to use circle hooks when bill fishing.

***Costa Rica was the first country in the world to adopt and enforce such a regulation, even the U.S. does not require their sports fishers to catch and release.***

With the circle hook, the angler drops the bait back to the fish for a short count, keeping the rod pointed at the fish. The fish is allowed to start swallowing the bait. The drag is then smoothly set, but NO motion is made to set the hook preventing damage. The ONLY way the circle hook can work is if it travels SLOWLY. Once the drag is set, the forward motion of the boat will begin to pull the bait out of the fish. If the bait is moving slowly, the circle hook will pivot at the corner of the mouth and hook the fish there.

### [North Pacific Charters](#)

Tamarindo-Flamingo-Guanamar

*Featuring marlin, sailfish, tuna, dorado, wahoo, roosterfish*

#### **Talking Fish - Captain Randy Wilson (Tamarindo)**



"Talking Fish" out of Tamarindo is a 38-foot Topaz Express powered by twin Detroit turbo diesels. This superbly set-up boat is fully equipped with Penn International, Shimano and accurate tackle, Furuno color depth sounder and Magellan GPS. Comfortably seating six anglers in the shade, it features a large cockpit and cabin with a V-berth and a private head with shower. Captain Randy Wilson (with mate Eitel) has extensive fishing experience since moving here in 1974. Randy is passionate about conservation and has developed techniques with lure/bait rigs to ensure billfish are not harmed.

#### **Wet Ass II - Captain Sonny Kocis (Flamingo/Carrillo)**

"Wet Ass II" out of Flamingo or Carrillo with legendary American Captain Sonny Kocis or fully bilingual Captain Rolando is a 31-foot Bertram with air-conditioned cabin and head. Its new twin 3116 Cat diesels allow it to cruise at 27 knots. Sonny specializes in light and fly fishing, with a world-record 260-pound blue marlin caught on fly by Jim Gray in August 1991. All custom tackle is from the USA.

#### **Capullo - Captain Steve Curtis (Tamarindo)**

"Capullo" out of Tamarindo is a 36-foot custom Topaz Sportfisher with Captain Steve Curtis at the helm. Se features a full cabin with head and shower, marlin tower, outriggers, large cockpit with fighting chair and all-IGFA tackle.

**Plautus - Captain Luis Ruíz (Flamingo/Papagayo)**



"Plautus" out of Flamingo, Tamarindo or Carillo, and also out of the Four Seasons Hotel in Papagayo, with Captain Luis Ruíz at the helm, is a 40-foot Gamefisher powered by two 350hp Diesels with great seating and shade, full electronics including Furuno radar and plot, Furuno color sounder and GPS, Penn and Shimano tackle.

**Ocean Smasher - Captain Adam Hermsen (Tamarindo)**



"Ocean Smasher" out of Tamarindo with Captain Adam Hermsen is a professionally rigged 31-foot Ocean Master with state-of-the-art electronics and the finest in fishing tackle. Powered by twin 225hp outboards, it features a lay-down rest area and a spacious head, a Rupp tuna tower and outriggers, Shimano and Tiagra two-speed reels, Sumo tackle, stand-up harnesses and fighting belts, two VHF radios, color fishfinder and auto pilot.

**Bushwacker - Captain Skeet Warren (Flamingo/Papagayo)**



"Bushwacker" out of Flamingo and Papagayo with Captain Skeet Warren is a 42-foot Bertram repowered by twin Cummins QSM-11 four-stroke engines. Fully air conditioned, the all-new equipment includes a fighting chair with a 4-rod rocket launcher, livewell, Penn, Shimano and Fisherman's Center rods and reels, Penn downrigger and Rupp outriggers, plus 72 mile radar.

### **Outcast - Captain José Asdrúbal López (Tamarindo)**



"Outcast" out of Tamarindo with Captain José Asdrúbal López and mate David is a 27-foot Dusky powered by twin 250hp Cummins diesels. The boat, which can take up to four anglers, has an 11.5-foot beam, tower, fighting chair, spacious and shaded seating area and roomy cabin with marine head. It carries GPS, depth sounder, outriggers and a full range of Penn international and Shimano tackle.

[Online Charter Reservations](#)