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fly for every one that actually strikes. This makes fly fishing a tedious game. Recently, while doing a TV film on barracuda, I caught several over-20pound fish on the fly in two days of sweat, but it was the toughest kind of casting I can remember.

Small barracuda strike more readily to slow retrieves and short casts, but an old razormouth demands action in his baits and you can dislocate a shoulder before hanging the first big fish with a fly. Personally, I enjoy the faster pace of plugging with light tackle, particularly in view of the fact that barracuda are suckers for top-water baits. Some of the wildest strikes I have ever seen were made by 4- and 5-foot-long barracuda, with as many as a half dozen fish all rushing at the same plug.

But don't think that bait casting is a hit-and-miss method. The way we fish for barracuda in the Bahamas is to stalk them along mangrove shores by slow-poling parallel to the islands. Although the fish are big, it's surprising how many you can spook in the course of a day. Unlike bonefish, which are almost constantly moving about, barracuda lie motionless and may appear as nothing more than a shadow on the bottom. During high tide they lie right up among the mangrove roots, and because of their ability to blend into any background even a 4-footer is hard to see until you've had some experience. Small sharks, such as the lemon, shovelnose, nurse, and blacktip, are always common in the same areas, but these can easily be distinguished by the undulating movement of their tails. The angler, of course, stands in the bow and watches for targets.

When sight-fishing on the flats we never cast near a barracuda. A lure that splashes close will invariably send the fish flashing off to deep water. Too close, by our definition, is within five feet of a visible target. There may be the exceptional cuda that will strike reflexively at anything that falls within reach, but such fish occur at the ratio of about one out of a hundred. It is far more effective to place your lure ten, even twenty feet ahead or beyond the cuda and retrieve the bait across his line of sight. When a barracuda wants to hit a plug it's impossible to reel fast enough to get it away from him, so



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