



The ultimate in 'hosted' angling adventures throughout the Amazon

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Amazon Species Watch Arapaima

Scientific Classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Actinopterygii
Order:	Osteoglossiformes
Family:	Arapaimidae
Genus:	Arapaima
Species:	A.gigas A.leptosoma

Distinguished by large thick scales and heavily sculptured head bones, Arapaima are amongst the largest freshwater fishes in the world, with reported lengths of up to 4m. There are at least two species within the Amazon and Essequibo basins, *A.gigas* and *A.leptosoma* and they have taken the common names of *Pirarucu* in Brazil, and *Paiche* in Peru. They can be found in rivers, flooded forests and especially in seasonally hypoxic (oxygen depleted) lakes and lagoons. Historically, Arapaima have been heavily overfished within their natural range, but recent efforts in fish management, particularly in Brazil have restored populations, although true Arapaima numbers are unknown, hence featuring on the IUCN 'Red List' as data deficient.

Arapaima are obligate (*by necessity*) air breathers, with a modified and enlarged swim bladder composed of a lung-like tissue. They routinely surface to engulf air, often accompanied by a loud 'snapping' sound, making them relatively easy to locate.



One of the most striking characteristics of the Arapaima is the vivid red colouration of their scale tips, thought to be more prevalent during the breeding season. Arapaima scales have a mineralised, hard outer layer with a corrugated surface, under which lie several layers of collagen fibres, providing the fish with an incredible armour plating. During the breeding season, Arapaima form pairs, with eggs being laid in excavated pits or 'nests', and both males and females guard the eggs, with the male mouth-brooding the fry after hatching. Despite their hardened exterior Arapaima are fragile and easily damaged, with a large and vital blood vessel running along its spine. This can be easily ruptured if mis-handled and is fatal for the fish.

Arapaima get big, with fish reported at in excess of 400lb. The current **IGFA** 'All tackle record' for the Arapaima is 339lb 8oz with the fish being captured in Ecuador, Amazonia 2010. On our trips, we regularly record catches at 200lb+ with many estimated at over 250lb. As a good rule of thumb, weight can be estimated by length x girth x girth/800, measure in inches for weight in lbs.



Catching Arapaima

Strong tackle all round for these powerful predators. For '**live & dead bait**' a similar set-up as used for Catfish, See our (*Tackle Tips – Catfish*) publication. But for Arapaima, no 'sinker' and circle hooks only. Bait is freelined having been cast toward fish as they show to take in air. For **fly fishing**, 10 to 14 wt. rods are best as mature fish can range from 100-400lbs. Reels designed for saltwater fly fishing are the best choice, with full sinking lines (we have heard of anglers using up to 750gram), although 300-400 gram may be more appropriate. For flies, try using large, articulated, weighted streamers with tandem rigs in size 2/0 or 3/0 and also flies that resemble bait fish. For **lure fishing**, short, heavy action rods coupled with a baitcaster or fixed spool reel with a smooth clutch and capable of holding 200yds+ of 100lb braid. Use a mono/fluoro leader and a strong swivel clip (coastlock type). Try throughout the water column with varying colours and retrieve types, so a mixed selection.

