DESCRIPTION – Tamiami Canal (C-4) is located in Miami-Dade County. It drains eastward from Water Conservation Area III past Miami International Airport to a non-navigable salinity control structure that prevents saltwater intrusion from the Atlantic Ocean. Tamiami Canal provides excellent freshwater fishing in more than 27 miles of navigable main canal and small lakes. The canal ranges from 40 to over 100 feet in width, averages about eight feet deep, and some lakes are more than 50 feet deep.

The lakes near Miami International Airport are noisy and often congested on weekends, but this area can be avoided by traveling west. From the boat ramp, it is 3.0 miles to the entrance of the Coral Cables Canal, 4.8 miles to the lateral canal connecting to McDonald Lake, and 7.6 miles to the intersection with Snapper Creek (immediately east of the Turnpike Extension). The non-navigable flood control structure on Tamiami Canal near Krome Avenue is approximately 13 miles from the boat ramp. The combination of Tamiami and Snapper Creek canal systems provide urban anglers more than 43 miles of exciting fishing opportunities.

BOAT RAMP DIRECTIONS – The only public boat ramp is located in Antonio Maceo Park. To reach the boat ramp, take the Turnpike Extension or I-95 to Hwy 836 (Dolphin Expressway). Take Hwy 836 east from the Turnpike or west from I-95 to Red Road (NW 57th Avenue). Go south on Red Road about 0.5 miles to NW 7th Street, east (left) 0.6 miles to NW 51st Avenue, and Antonio Maceo Park is on the left side just before NW 51st Avenue. GPS COORDINATES (25.7796, -80.2786).

This park is open from dawn to dusk, and is operated by the City of Miami Parks and Recreation Department. The two-lane ramp is paved and in excellent condition. The park has picnic tables, grills, a playground, restrooms, and a paved parking area. There is a fee to launch boats on weekends and holidays. Note: manatees are quite common, so be careful boating and watch for posted regulations.

FOOD AND GASOLINE – There are some service stations and fast food restaurants with restrooms on the south side of SW 8th Street (Tamiami Trail) that can be seen by anglers in a boat; many are also conveniently located along the land route to the boat ramp.

GENERAL FISHING INFORMATION – Tamiami Canal offers some of the most exciting and varied canal fishing in all of southeast Florida. Several anglers have reported canal ‘trifecta’ or ‘grand slam’ catches of Butterfly Peacock and Largemouth Bass topped-off with a Snook or even a Tarpon. The Butterfly Peacock is a world-renowned gamefish that was successfully introduced in the mid-1980s by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to eat undesirable exotic fishes, and to provide more sportfishing for anglers in the metropolitan Miami-West Palm Beach area.

Fallen trees, canal intersections, sharp bends, and dead ends are generally productive areas for catching most species of fish. Sportfishes also congregate in the shade of bridges, culverts, and other structures. Shoreline vegetation, rip-rap, and other small residential seawalls (particularly in lateral canals) also provide good fishing opportunities. If there is a strong current in the main canal, spend more time fishing lateral canals, small lakes, and other areas that offer refuge from the current (e.g., cut-outs, bridge pilings, and the downstream side of spillways). Butterfly Peacock and Largemouth Bass that average about 14 inches (1.6 pounds), and 57% of the harvestable Butterfly Peacock and 43% of the Largemouth Bass are larger than this. The biggest Butterfly Peacock (10 pounds) came from the main canal. The bag limit for Butterfly Peacock is two fish per day, only one of which can be greater than 17 inches; up to five Largemouth Bass can be kept, but only one of these can be greater than 16 inches.

Fishing for Butterfly Peacock is usually best from March through May, but they are caught consistently throughout the year. Butterfly Peacock feed only during daylight and normally close to shore, although schooling peacocks will sometimes feed aggressively in open water. Largemouth Bass fishing tends to be best during the winter when the water cools, and early in the morning, evenings, and even at night during the summer.

Butterfly Peacock are more likely to be caught using live fish for bait than are Largemouth Bass, which make them an excellent fish for younger anglers, as well as those just learning to bass fish. Live fish such as small Golden Shiners purchased at local tackle shops, are the best overall bait for both Butterfly Peacock and Largemouth Bass. It is illegal to use Goldfish or any other non-native fish for bait. For those who enjoy fishing with artificial lures, just about any fast moving minnow imitating plug or fly can be used to entice a peacock.

Early in the morning look for Tarpon rolling at the surface, especially in the area just east of Red Road. Snook can be found throughout the canal system but tend to concentrate along vegetated shorelines and under bridges close to lake areas. Another species anglers might catch resembles a Walleye; this fish is the brackish water Bightmouth Sleeper which is a long, cylindrical fish with many small sharp teeth.

The number and quality of panfish over six inches in Tamiami Canal is about average for area canals. Live worms and crickets are the choice baits for many panfish anglers, although fresh bread or bread dough works well, is readily available, and it costs less. Shoreline anglers will need to do some exploring to find the best locations for shoreline fishing, and always be sure to park cars safely on public right of ways.

Tamiami Canal anglers might also catch a Jaguar Guapote from Central America, Oscar from South America, or Spotted Tilapia from Africa. These exotic fishes were illegally released, and pose a threat to native species. Jaguar Guapote resemble a Black Crappie (Speckled Perch) with many small, sharp teeth. Oscar are a bream-shaped fish with a red or orange circle at the base of the tail, and they have a thick coat of protective mucus on their bodies. Spotted Tilapia are also bream-shaped, golden in color with black spots or bars, and some adults have red on them. These exotic fishes are good to eat, and you can keep every one you catch.

Tamiami and other area canals receive a great deal of fishing pressure so we encourage anglers to release most, if not all of the Butterfly Peacock, Largemouth Bass, and Snook they catch. If anglers don’t release a majority of the sportfish they catch, these high quality fisheries will deteriorate rapidly.

Anglers, particularly those from outside the metropolitan Miami-West Palm Beach area, should be aware that vandalism occurs at some boat ramps. Therefore, care should be taken to secure your vehicle and keep valuables out of sight or take them with you when you leave the ramp.

For more Florida fishing information, please visit Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s web site at www.MyFWC.com/fishing.

This series of Southeast Florida angler guides are available at www.bit.ly/AnglerGuide.