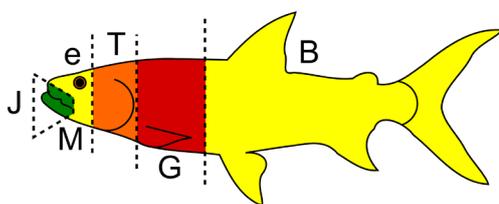


### MINIMISING HOOK INJURY

Hook injury is one of the primary causes of death in released fish. Hooks can cause severe damage at the hooking location and these injuries can severely impact a fish's chance of survival. Through careful fishing, the selection of appropriate tackle and proper handling of hooked fish can all help minimise the damage caused by hooks and greatly decrease the chance of post-release mortality.

Fish are generally hooked in one of five different areas, each with varying risk of injury. By using the correct terminal tackle and making slight changes to the way you fish deep-hooking and other damage to fish can be avoided.



Hooking location plays a role in injury and post-release mortality. Generally fish deep hooked in the gut (G) or throat and gills (T) are more likely to suffer post-release mortality than those hooked in the mouth (M) or jaw and lips (J) where damage is usually minimal or not very severe. Foul hooking on the outside of the body (B) can cause some damage especially if sensitive parts such as the eyes (e) are involved.



### Best practice to minimise hook injury

#### Use the right hooks

- Use barbless hooks. They cause less damage and are easier to remove.
- Use circle hooks. They reduce the risk of deep hooking.
- Use single, barbless hooks rather than trebles. They cause less damage and are easier to remove.
- Use larger hooks than usual. This can reduce the chance of deep-hooking

#### Use lures rather than bait

- Lures are less likely to cause deep hooking than fishing with bait.
- Change treble hooks on lures for single, barbless hooks.

#### Remove hooks without causing further damage

- Long-nosed pliers or large surgical forceps (hemostat) are useful tools for removing deeply-embedded hooks or for fish with large teeth
- Hooks embedded deep in the throat or gut should not be removed as attempting to remove them will most likely cause further damage. Rather cut the line outside the mouth and release the fish with the hook in.
- For hooks embedded in the gills it may be possible to cut the line, lift the gill cover and remove the hook through the opening rather than through the mouth. Care must be taken however, not to touch or damage the delicate gill-filaments

#### Pay attention

- Unless you are using circle hooks, fish should not be allowed to swallow bait. Don't leave baited lines unattended.



Predatory fish such as tigerfish have tough mouths adapted to catching spiny or bony prey. Hooking these fish in the jaw or mouth is less likely to cause serious damage than hooking them in the throat or gut. Using the right hooks, can minimise the chance of deep hooking (by using circle hooks), reduce the amount of damage caused by the hook and make the removal of the hook much easier (by using barbless hooks and avoiding the use of treble hooks)

### Fish-friendly tackle

Rather than replacing the contents of your tackle box it is easy and inexpensive to convert your existing tackle



Treble hooks on lures can easily be replaced with single hooks with a wide gape



If barbless hooks are not available, simply squash the barbs on your existing hooks flat with a pair of fishing pliers

## Respect • Record • Release

For more information on how you can participate in fish conservation on the Lower Zambezi visit [www.wildtracks-zambia.com/index.php/LZCRI](http://www.wildtracks-zambia.com/index.php/LZCRI)

### RELATED MATERIAL

GUIDELINES - Catch & Release  
GUIDELINES - Circle hooks for tigerfish