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VOLUME 25 • ISSUE 308

**COASTALANGLERMAG.COM**

NOVEMBER 2020

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# Fishing a Fairytale in Bristol Bay, Alaska

By Nick Carter

Arguably the best salmonid fishing in the world exists in the system of waterways that feeds the Bering Sea on Alaska's southwest coast. The region is a vast, sparsely populated web of streams and rivers, lakes and wetlands that weave through open tundra to Bristol Bay.

The wildlife is astounding. To be there is like stepping into a documentary film, with bears, moose and bald eagles going about their business unconcerned by human visitors.

On a July afternoon, I watched in terror as a brown bear crashed from the brush, bluff charged my wife and stole the sockeye salmon from the end of her line. It's that kind of place. From fancy lodges or tiny riverside fishing villages, human anglers are nothing special. They are just one of many species taking advantage of the great salmon migrations that drive the ecosystem.

All five species of Pacific salmon spawn in the Bristol Bay watershed. Coho, chum and pink salmon all make runs up the rivers that feed the bay. But king and sockeye salmon are the reason anglers should book passage to the area.

The Nushagak River boasts what might be Alaska's best king, or Chinook, salmon run. Back bouncing egg sacks on heavy casting tackle, anglers regularly do battle with big kings in the 20- to 40-pound range.

Just a short puddle-jump down the coast, the Kvichak River hosts the largest sockeye salmon run on the planet. Sockeye pile into the river by the millions and push up into the headwaters to spawn and then die. For thousands of years, this transmission of nutrients from the sea inland has fueled the region's wildlife, tundra and forests of alder and spruce. An angler with a fly rod can stand on the bank and cast streamers to huge pods of sockeye as they run past. Hooking one is no problem; it's like collecting meat. The fight, however, is that of a creature determined to achieve its sole remaining purpose on earth.



These massive salmon runs feed all of the wildlife in the Bristol Bay region, and that includes rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, arctic grayling and others. Some area rivers are places where mouse patterns streaking across the surface draw aggressive strikes from rainbows 30-inches and longer. I can't count the number of 25-plus-inch rainbows and Dollys we caught in a single day swinging big streamers. During and after the salmon runs, fish key in on salmon eggs and chunks of dead salmon adrift in the rivers. This is when egg patterns and flesh flies lead to unbelievable numbers of big fish.

It's the kind of fishing that only occurs where humans have yet to make a pronounced impact on systems designed by nature.

And that's where the Bristol Bay fairytale is in danger of ending.

In 2005, gold, molybdenum and copper deposits were discovered underground near the headwaters of the Nushagak and Kvichak rivers, just a few miles from the banks of Alaska's largest lake, Lake Iliamna. Ever since, conservation groups, sporting groups and locals have been waging a legal battle against greed to save this pristine landscape and fishery.

As proposed, the Pebble Mine would be an enormous scar on the landscape. According to The Wild Salmon Center, it would destroy an estimated 10,000 acres of wetlands and more than 330 miles of streams at the head of the most productive salmon fishery in the world. Annually, an estimated 10.6 billion gallons of mine-polluted wastewater would be sent downstream toward Bristol Bay.

For anyone who has ever fished or hopes to fish in a place as unspoiled as the Bristol Bay drainage, it's unconscionable such a project is even being considered.

For more information, visit [www.savebristolbay.org](http://www.savebristolbay.org).

# Permit

By CAM Staff

## The Ultimate Challenge on Flats of the Keys

If it's farther away, it must be better. While there's truth to this concept that sends anglers around the globe seeking out remote and spectacular fisheries, there are also flaws to this way of thinking.

It's like the bank fisherman who strives to chuck baits as far offshore as possible only to cross lines with the boater casting tight to shoreline structure. While you're at home dreaming of Indo-Pacific atolls, there's an angler on the other side of the world flipping through magazine images of the Florida Keys.

It'd be a shame to forget that geography gifted North Americans with some of the most productive and gorgeous flats habitat on the planet. Nobody knows this better than Capt. Luke Kelly of Key Flat Charters.

Kelly has spent his life fishing the Keys. He operates year-round backcountry and flats charters out of Sugarloaf Key Marina. It's about 20 minutes north of Key West on A1A, slap in the middle of the mangrove islands and vast crystal-clear flats of the Lower Keys.

This is a place where anglers watch from the casting deck of a small flats boat as tarpon, bonefish, permit and other species cruise and hunt in knee-deep water. A flats slam of all three species is possible any day of the year, and while the power and aerobatics of a big tarpon might be the ultimate thrill in angling, permit are the ultimate challenge... especially with fly tackle.

"Permit are highly sensitive and can sense the slightest vibration. It's the challenge of this hunt that makes it all worthwhile," said Capt. Luke. "With little room for error, anglers must be precise and stealthy during their first attempt, as second chances rarely exist when targeting permit on fly. Considered by many as

the ultimate catch during a fly-fishing career, permit demand the best from anglers and guides."

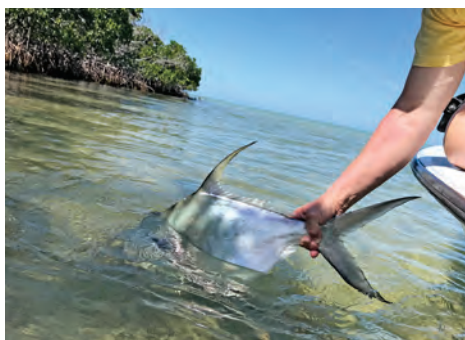
Kelly said convincing a permit to take the hook is the most difficult aspect of the pursuit. They are abundant in the Lower Keys, especially during the late February through April pre-spawn, when 10- to 40-pounders invade the flats. The easiest way to hook one is to accurately present a live crab with light spinning tackle. Permit feed aggressively when they feel comfortable, Kelly said, but they spook easily.

"Once alerted by boat or angler, that's it, the jig is up," he said, "and the permit never gives second chances."

The odds of a hook-up reduce dramatically for anglers who take up the challenge with an 8- to 10-weight fly rod. A good double-haul is required to achieve the long accurate casts necessary to put a shrimp or crab fly in front of a permit. From there, it's up to the angler to give life to the fly during a short time-window of opportunity.

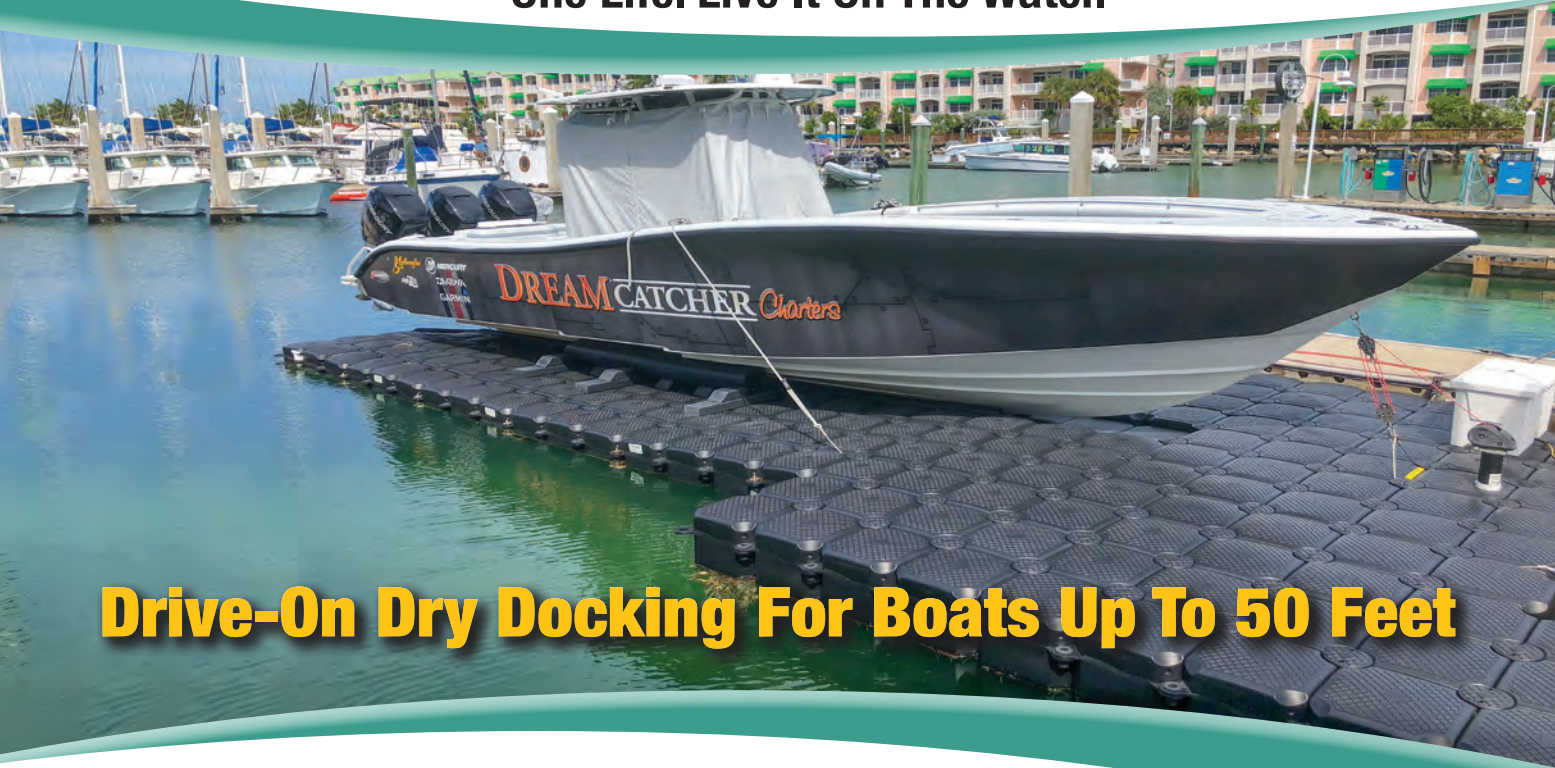
"Proper technique found successful in hooking permit on fly varies greatly with any given situation," Kelly said. "Permit eat a variety of different things, all of which act differently in the wild. Anglers must be willing to think outside the box at times when trying to fool this ultimate gamefish into eating something artificial... It boils down to a challenge, and should be viewed in no other way."

Contact Capt. Luke Kelly and Key Flat Charters for light tackle and fly fishing trips for tarpon, bonefish, permit and more. [www.lowerkeysflatsfishing.com](http://www.lowerkeysflatsfishing.com) / (305) 304-3152 / [keyflat@icloud.com](mailto:keyflat@icloud.com).





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# STELLAR FISHING IN THE NORTHERN Bahamas

By Justin Lewis, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust

Last year, Hurricane Dorian devastated Grand Bahama and Abaco. The most destructive hurricane to ever hit The Bahamas, it destroyed homes and businesses and displaced thousands of people.

After the dust settled, I got a lot of questions about how the marine environment and the fishery fared after such a powerful storm. As Bahamas initiative manager for Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT), I keep an eye on such things. After several surveys, getting out fishing and hearing reports from other anglers, it appears the inshore and offshore fisheries weathered the storm well. There are plenty of big bonefish and permit on the flats, the reefs are full of snapper, hogfish and grouper, and the offshore tuna and mahi bite is great.

The northern Bahamas remains one of the world's foremost destinations for anglers. With lodging and charters recovering from the storm and Covid-19 restrictions beginning to ease, now is a good time to plan a trip. Fishing pressure is down, and the islands could certainly use an economic injection from anglers.

One of the great things about these islands is there's no need to travel far or break the bank for incredible fishing. The main islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama sit on the Little Bahama Bank and give access to more than 5,700 square miles of reefs and flats with an easy run to productive offshore waters.

For a quick weekend or family trip, you can't beat access by air or sea. Commercial flights are 45 minutes from Miami or Fort Lauderdale, and a boat ride is just two to four hours, depending on your destination.

Fishing the northern Bahamas offers some of the greatest variety of sportfish anywhere in the world. In the same day, you can catch bonefish on the flats, spearfish the reefs for hogfish and lobster, and then head offshore after dolphin and tuna.

**SEASONS:** Right now, the winter bite is on. High-speed trolling the drop-off is producing big wahoo. Spearfishing is also good for hogfish and lobster.

Come spring, late-season wahoo will be around, and the dolphin and yellowfin bite really picks up. Blue and white marlin are also popular spring targets around Abaco, and bonefish and permit can be phenomenal on the flats.

Summer is time for multi-day trips targeting tuna, hogfish, grouper, snappers, bonefish and permit. Deep dropping and spearfishing are particularly good in summer.

**MANGROVES:** While the fishing remains stellar, mangroves were heavily impacted by Dorian. Mangrove habitat is an important nursery for many fish species, and it is vital to protect the coast from erosion and storms.

BTT found that 70 percent of the mangroves on Grand Bahama and 40 percent on Abaco were lost to the storm. BTT is collaborating with Bahamas National Trust, Friends of the Environment and MANG to restore mangroves on Abaco and Grand Bahama. Check out [www.bonefishtarpontrust.org](http://www.bonefishtarpontrust.org) for info on this project.

Before making a trip to The Bahamas, visit [www.bahamas.com](http://www.bahamas.com) for current information on access and checking in with customs. Fishing regulations are available at [www.myoutislands.com](http://www.myoutislands.com).

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# FOLLOW BAIT AND WATER TEMPERATURE

TIM BAREFOOT



**N**ow is truly a transition time for a number of things including the number of daylight hours, water temps and the mass migration of baitfish.

The number of daylight hours is a major signal to all species of fish from mullet to marlin and everything in between. Daylight hours decline by a minute or so a day until Dec. 20. Fish and bait understand this. They react accordingly by putting the feedbag on.

Another important piece of the puzzle is dropping water temperatures. Every species in the ocean, from nearshore and offshore waters to the shallow marshes, reacts by working temperature breaks. Areas with dramatic thermal change will concentrate fish.

When the cooler north/northwest winds start howling, distinct water temperature breaks will become more defined. Pelagics, bottom fish and the bait they pursue will all be affected. Bait like cigar minnows and sardines will gather in large schools. Everything we fish for looks forward to this buffet. Some of the best grouper bites I've ever encountered were on or near structure where huge stacks of baitfish were consolidated.

But the bait is the most important part of the equation. As a matter of fact, I've been on some crazy good bites that were on slick flat sand bottom that held big stacks of bait. It's pretty simple... find the bait; find the fish.

Once gags, reds and scamps start their true spawning rituals, the bait becomes less important, but for right now, I'd focus on the food rather than simply the structure. It's a given that the big spawning gags will key in on the best bottom, as long as it holds bait. However, grouper certainly follow these huge schools of bait around wherever they go. This is especially true for red grouper. They will follow the bait and almost disregard the ledges and structure.



Granted, a live cigar minnow is one of the most desirable baits of all time for grouper and big snapper, but a big live sardine is absolutely irresistible! It must be the oil content or the taste, but I'll take a large live sardine on a Crab Decoy Jig over anything out there. I'm not discounting a live vermilion snapper (beeliner), though.

Speaking of a live beeliner, don't ever hesitate to put out a live beeliner on the light line for a smoking hot wahoo bite when anchored up bottom fishing. Bottom fishing and light lining or kite fishing is almost at the apex of the year, with December and the first few weeks of January being the best.

Get out there and get after it!



For more tips and tactics from Tim Barefoot, go to:  
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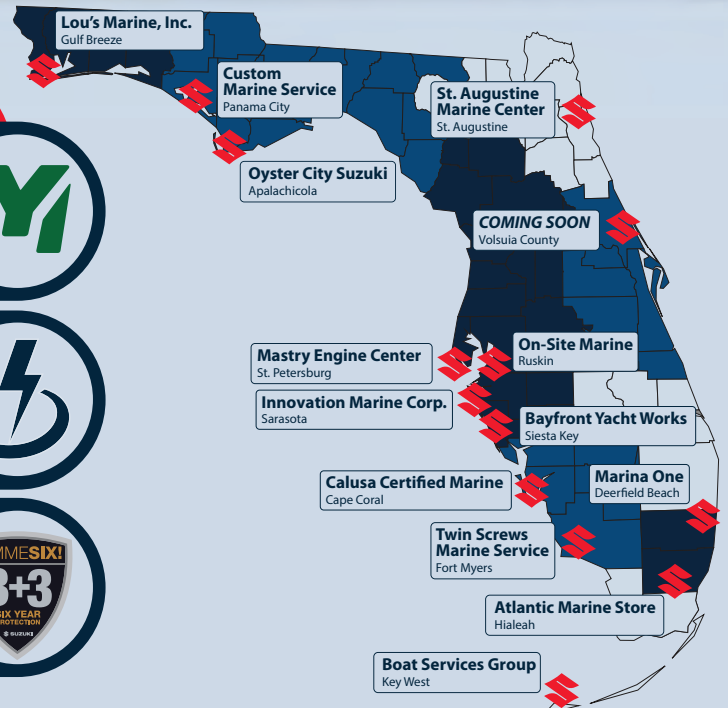
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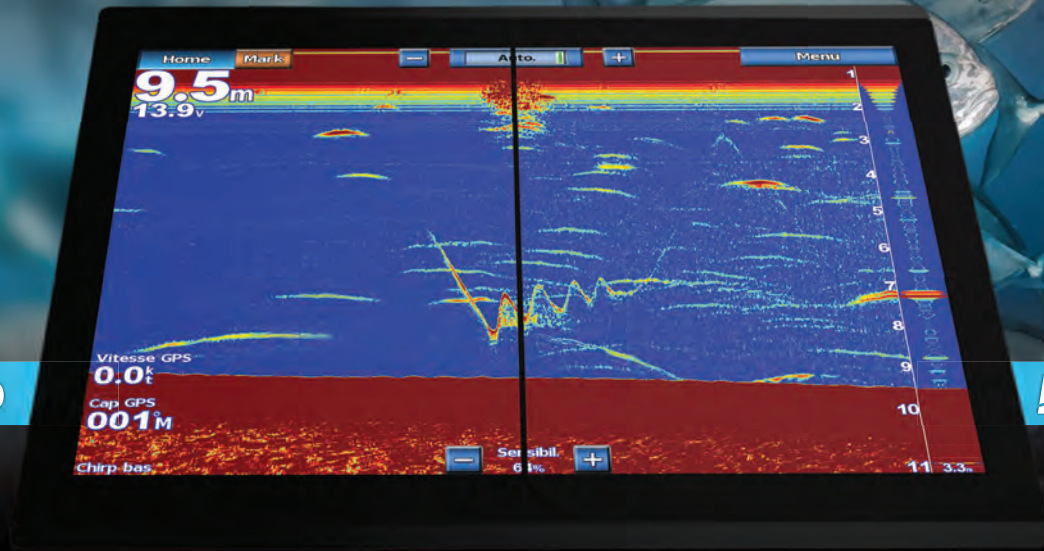
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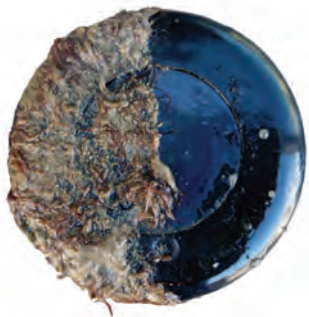


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# Special Nights Underwater

By John Lidington



Pura Vida Divers divemaster Jenna Konyok spots a juvenile snapper in the sea grass.

My first published story in *Skin Diver Magazine*, almost 50 years ago, was a night-diving article, "Who's Afraid of the Dark?" Back then, night diving was a novelty, and I was making a light-hearted attempt to allay people's fear of all the things they imagined lurking in the surrounding darkness.

Today night diving has gone mainstream. Divers can explore independently, hire a dive guide to help them navigate in the darkness, or become familiar with protocols for night diving by earning their PADI Night Diver distinctive specialty certification.

Pura Vida Divers in Palm Beach County offers both night dive charter trips to the offshore reefs and shore-based night dives at the Blue Heron Bridge, also known as Phil Foster Park.

These BHB night dives are very popular. Darkness doesn't alter anything about what makes this spot a world-class dive. The varied topography of sand, sea grass, bridge pilings and a variety of artificial reefs and other submerged objects offers shelter to an incredibly diverse collection of marine life drawn from the estuary, the inshore reefs and the nearby Gulf Stream.

But nighttime does change the cast of characters on display. The sergeant majors, grunts, snappers, and parrotfish that parade around during the day have retired to hiding spots. Now the previously hidden lobsters, crabs, shrimps and urchins have come out to forage. Animals that typically spend daytime trying to blend in, like octopuses and batfish, are on the move.

As a county park, Phil Foster Park closes to divers at sunset. Luckily, Pura Vida Divers coordinates with the county to obtain night dive permits, which allows divers to explore the site after dark! Night dive passes are available to divers for free.

There's a lot to see there—the wreckage of a small boat, some old scaffolding, and a variety of rocks and other detritus scattered about the sand. The moderate current takes you toward the pilings of the east bridge, where eels like to hunt. A typical dive plan mimics the current—working toward and around the bridge until slack tide, then coming back to shore when the current reverses.

The Blue Heron Bridge at night is a unique bucket-list experience. One diver on a recent trip told me, "I'm not usually that comfortable on night dives. But this was great! We saw a batfish, an octopus and a nurse shark. I wouldn't have missed it for anything!"

Of course, once you've crossed "BHB night dive" off your bucket list, next up is a blackwater dive.

Call Pura Vida Divers at (561) 840-8750 and check out their SCUBA calendar at [www.puravidadivers.com](http://www.puravidadivers.com).



A scrawled cowfish shows off its dramatic night coloration.

PHOTOS BY JOHN LIDINGTON

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# Fishing the Shadow Line

By John Saporito

PHOTO BY JASON JACOBS/FLICR.COM

**P**redatory fish are masters of finding lucrative feeding opportunities, which occur at the intersection of food availability and an easy way to capture prey. One of the best examples of this is when shadows are present in the water. The darkness of a shadow makes a perfect ambush point for predators, which usually wait just inside the shadow to lunge out at prey swimming in the lighter water or wait for prey to enter the darkness and pounce on the free meal.

Sometimes, gamefish will be found in the lighted water itself. These fish are positioned to intercept bait that emerges from the darkness and is temporarily stunned by the transition

from dark to light. But shadows are more than just an ambush point. The predators themselves like cover for their own protection; the darkened water offers them shelter where they are not so easily spied by even larger predators.

Shadows are found in both freshwater and salt and create feeding opportunities day and night. Their best application in fishing, however, is when they occur at night in conjunction with artificial light. Light from a roadway, bridge, or dock will carve a deep shadow in the water where it is interrupted by a solid object. And not only is the transition between shadow and light profound, but baitfish and other small creatures are attracted

to light, as they hope for their own opportunity to feed.

This is a win-win for predators and anglers alike. The icing on the cake is a moving current that sweeps bait near the structure that is creating the shadow. This is the ticket to locating concentrations of both predator and prey, the critical ingredient in the recipe for productive shadow fishing.

There are two places in the water column for fish to be in a shadow line situation: just below the surface and at the bottom. Subsurface fish give you the chance to see exactly where your quarry lies and where your casts should land. Fish on the bottom won't be visible to you, but they are less wary and more likely to strike at your offering.

Both natural bait and artificial lures work on shadow feeders, although lures really perform well once you have learned what predators are looking for in a target. The key is that a lure can be manipulated to do what its user wants more effectively than both live bait—which has a mind of its own—and dead bait, which does not move as well as artificials do.

Strikes often take place when the offering is maneuvered parallel to the shadow line itself, in the lighted water just beyond the darkness. Natural presentation can be learned from first-hand observation wherever shadows and fish are found. Watch how prey moves between the light and dark; study how and when predators make their attack. Experience is the best way to improve your approach.

*John Saporito is a lifelong fisherman and student of the seas. Visit him online at [guerillaangling.com](http://guerillaangling.com).*



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# NEW REEF FISH HOOK REGS APPROVED

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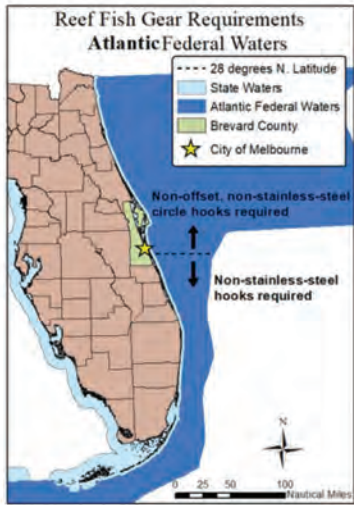
**F**WC recently approved new hook requirements in Atlantic state waters intended to improve reef fish catch-and-release survival rates.

Starting Jan. 1, 2021, anglers using hook-and-line with natural baits to target reef fish like snapper or grouper from a vessel in Atlantic state waters will be required to use non-stainless-steel, non-offset circle hooks north of 28 degrees north latitude (near Melbourne) and non-stainless-steel hooks south of 28 degrees north latitude.

These changes are consistent with requirements in Atlantic federal waters that recently took effect. Non-stainless-steel, non-offset circle hooks are already required when fishing for reef fish in Gulf state waters and have been a successful tool in minimizing the number of fish that do not survive release.

“We hope that these new hook requirements, along with emphasizing best fishing practices through our educational resources and strategic messaging, will help empower anglers to conserve fisheries for the future,” said Commissioner Mike Sole. “Although not required, it’s also important to have a venting tool or descending device ready to use in case you need to release a fish that is impacted by barotrauma.”

Getting fish back into the water as quickly as possible is important to fish survival. FWC encourages the use of tools such as descending devices and venting tools when barotrauma occurs so long as they do not prolong release.



To learn more about proper fish handling techniques, visit [MyFWC.com/FishHandling](http://MyFWC.com/FishHandling).

Non-stainless-steel hooks should degrade faster in the marine environment compared to stainless steel or other non-corrodible metals. Use of these hooks may ultimately improve survival if the line is broken or the hook cannot be removed, and increase a fish’s chance to shed the hook over time. Additionally, non-offset circle hooks more often hook fish in the mouth rather than the gut, which reduces internal harm to the fish and decreases de-hooking time for the angler, and minimizing damage to the fish’s organs.

Allowing the use of other types of non-stainless-steel hooks south of 28 degrees north latitude accommodates for regionally-important south Florida fisheries, such as yellowtail snapper, in which the use of J hooks allows for greater efficiency and reduced discard mortality.

For more information, go to [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com).



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# Flounder Time

By Capt. Michael Okruhlik

For many anglers, catching flounder happens by chance while targeting trout and reds. But during the fall run it's worth setting aside a day or two to target these interesting creatures. Not only are flounder some of the best tasting inshore fish, they are challenging and rewarding to land, and even more so on soft plastics.

Everything from setting the hook to getting them in the net or in your hand can be a little more challenging than with other fish. Here are a few tips to help you land more flounder.

I set aside several days each fall for flounder fishing, but for those who prefer specks and reds, here is an idea. Fall brings many days when conditions are not favorable for the open bay or long rough boat rides to your trout hole. Maybe the tides are too low and the barometer is too high?

On days when you would normally stay home, consider a walk-in flounder spot in an area along their migration route out of the bay. Those days typically spent on the sofa could turn into the best flounder trip of your life.

How many times have you had to say how many flounder you lost vs. how many you caught? This is not an uncommon occurrence, especially for those who don't specifically fish for them. Let's start with a basic tip, but one you might overlook. When fishing for flounder, always start each trip with a new sharp hook. This might sound elementary, but I—like many who tie on a jighead and use it for several trout trips without issues—have neglected this simple step. A dull hook seriously works against you when dealing with flatties and their boney jaws.

I also use a heavier action rod than what I use for trout. The faster



PHOTO COURTESY OF KNOCKIN TAIL LURES

action allows me to feel the lure and the bite. A solid backbone allows for a sure hookset to penetrate their hard jaw. Additionally, using braided line amplifies the effectiveness of the above-mentioned items.

Although I have landed many flounder with a boga or my hand, when I am specifically targeting flounder, I always bring a landing net. Since I do most of my fishing while wading, the net also serves as a great place to leave flounder while removing the hook and securing fish on a stringer. On more than one occasion, these hard-to-hold fish have slipped out of my hands while removing the hook or stringing. I learned the hard way to keep them in the net until they are secure.

This fall, take the opportunity to salvage those "bad fishing days" and turn them into great flounder catching days!

*Capt. Michael Okruhlik is the inventor of Knockin Tail Lures, Controlled Descent Lures and the owner of [www.MyCoastOutdoors.com](http://www.MyCoastOutdoors.com).*

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# TAMPA BAY FISHING REPORT

BY: CAPT. WOODY GORE



Just a reminder--snook, redfish and trout are catch and release only. The water temperatures should start cooling a bit and, when that happens, snook fishing ought to brighten up in Tampa Bay. We've maintained decent snook action all summer, and November should turn out nicely. Anglers have been catching impressive quantities on both half and three-quarter day trips, most averaging in the 22 to 28-inch range with several over 30 inches. Artificial lures are a blast, especially if you enjoy matching wits with a line-sider. If not live bait, free-lined or under a cork will always do the trick.

The redfish action was booming in October and should continue right through November. This time of year, the redfish move onto the grass flats. That is when you will see an armada of flats or bay boats chasing them up and down the flats. When this happens, the fish become very skittish and can stop eating. That is why we've always preferred finding a few fish feeding quietly by themselves and fish them on our own. Redfish can be picky eaters. So, when they hesitate to take live bait, i.e., greenbacks, plump juicy shrimp or pinfish, we will try a piece of cut bait, i.e., a larger greenback cut in half, or a strip of fresh-cut mullet, bluefish, or ladyfish. Any redfish or snook in the area will pick up the scent, hone in and find it. Sometimes, we also suspend it under a cork letting the scent travel with the current.

The trout bite should continue right into winter, so be prepared for some decent trout fishing action. Drift any broken-bottom grass flat, casting free-lined

live bait or putting it under a popping cork. Here is a novel idea. Try casting artificial lures while using light action spinning tackle and soft plastic baits. You will have a ball catching and releasing this beautiful Tampa Bay fish. Remember, trout are one of our most fragile species: whenever possible, please handle it using a de-hooker tool and never bring them into the boat, if you can avoid it.

Schools of mackerel, bluefish, yellowtail jacks, and ladyfish should still be chasing bait around the Bay. As you are cruising around, watch for diving birds. Find the birds, and you've found feeding fish. Set up a drift near the activity and get ready for some fast, furious and drag-screaming action. I suggest a minimum of 60-pound Seaguar leader and long shank 2/0 Daiichi hooks. If the bite is on, bring plenty of leader and hooks and be prepared to retie.

Always be prepared for the occasional cobia or shark. Have a heavier rig ready to toss a small pinfish to a passing cobia. If you are doing any chumming, it doesn't take much to get some sharks interested. There are usually plenty of smaller blacktip sharks around, but a larger cut-bait like a 1/2 juicy Spanish mackerel free-lined in the current on heavier tackle usually does the trick.

Mangrove snapper are excellent eating fish. They are all over the Bay and not bashful about eating small greenbacks or shrimp. You must be quick, or they'll clean your hook before you know it. If you feel the bump and do not set the hook, at that exact instant, you might as well reel up, because your bait is gone. Please check myfwc.com for the proper hooks for snapper fishing.



Cap'n Mark Gore with Heath Johnson and one of several nice redfish.

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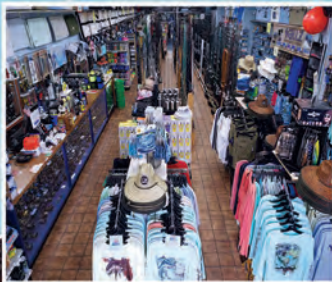
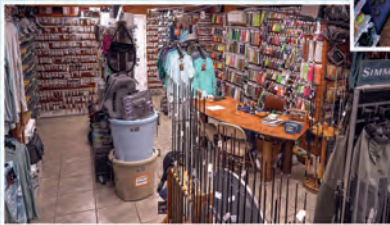
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# ST. PETE REPORT

BY: CAPT. ANTHONY CORCELLA



## KINGFISH TIME

The kingfish and Spanish mackerel will be around the bait schools. Look for the birds and the mackerel, and kings will be there. For Spanish mackerel, live whitebait and shrimp are a safe bet. Small silver spoons or Gotcha lures will provide steady action too.

If targeting the kingfish, slow trolling a live blue runner, sardine or ladyfish on a stinger rig is a proven technique. A spoon or diving plug trolled on a planer is also a tried and true method for the hard bait crowd. The areas around the Skyway Bridge are top mackerel and kingfish grounds. The gear I like to use for these bad boys

is a nice 6k to 8k spinning reel and a 7-foot 6-inch Kris Green custom fishing rod. These rods can be bought at St. Pete fishing outfitters.

Tripletail will be around the markers, buoys, off the beach and in Tampa Bay. I like to use good size shrimp and white bait.

The inshore gag grouper will also be a hot bite due to the cooler water temps. They will be coming in from offshore. Fish near the sides of the main shipping channel. Look for them on rock piles and in the middle of the channel.

The Redfish bite remains outstanding at Weeden Island. The bait of choice is cut pinfish or white bait. This should remain the rest of the year there.

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- Debris around the pump and switch that may inhibit water to enter the pump or the float switch to operate.
- Damaged or cracked mounts.
- Corrosion on wires and connections.
- Loose, crushed, or split discharge hoses.



The float switch and bilge pump should be tested on a regular basis. To test the external float switch, simply lift the float up momentarily to see if the pump comes on. Let the float back down and the pump should shut off. If your vessel is so equipped, the pump can be tested by the toggle switch which is usually located on the console.

Automatic bilge pumps detect water in various ways. Make sure they are operating according to manufacturer's specifications. This can be found in your owner's manual or online.

If this is a job you do not feel like tackling yourself, feel free to contact HSI Marine. The crew there can assist you with all your bilge pump needs.



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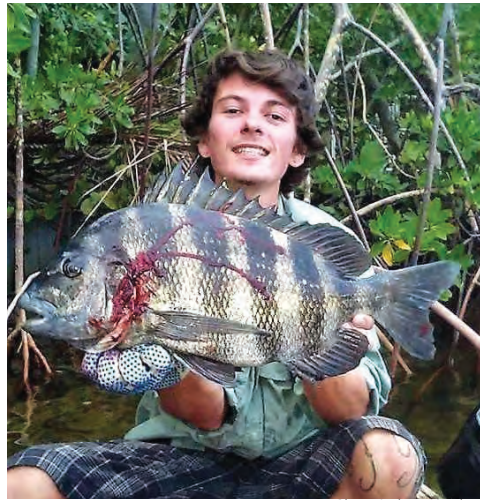


Photo: Anthony Macaluso

**A**rchosargus probatocephalus, better known as sheephead, are a member of the porgy family. It is said, to catch sheephead, you have to set the hook before the fish has even touched your bait! These elusive, prison-stripped thieves are delicious eating.

Sheepshead are a hearty fish. They have five to six black bars covering their gray bodies. A characteristic that stands out is their prominent “goat-like” teeth. The fish average 10 to 20 inches in length and 3 to 4 pounds. The largest of this species can be as long as 30 inches.

Sheepshead can be found as far north as Nova Scotia and as far south as Brazil. Their favorite habitats are bridges, jetties, piers, wrecks and reefs. They spawn near shore in late winter and early spring.

It is relatively easy to catch sheephead as a by-catch, but to target them is a different story. A small hook must be used with the proper line and equipment. An effective way to chum for these fish is to scrape the barnacles off of bridges and piers. This can be done easily using a simple garden tool.

Artificial lures are not an effective way to catch sheephead. Shrimp, sand fleas, fiddler crabs and mussels are all very good baits to lure these finicky fish. With their sharp gill covers and mouth full of teeth, expect some cut offs. To compound the problem, their preferred environments (bridges and piers) can cause some difficulty.

Sheepshead can be difficult to clean, but it is well worth the trouble. Their diet consists of mainly crustaceans. Their meat is flaky and has an excellent taste. With some research and plenty of practice, you will be able to catch this elusive convict.

Sheepshead can be difficult to clean, but it is well worth the trouble. Their diet consists of mainly crustaceans. Their meat is flaky and has an excellent taste. With some research and plenty of practice, you will be able to catch this elusive convict.

*Paul Presson, outdoor writer and published cartoonist. He has fished the coastlines of Tampa Bay for 28 years, land based, wade, kayak and by flats boat. If he is not writing, he is out on the water!*



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## TIME FOR THANKSGIVING



This is the time of year we should all be thankful for the things we have, whether it be family, friends, health or the ability to be on the water. Living in Florida my whole life, I sometimes take the water for granted. A lot of people around this country almost never get to see the Gulf or Atlantic waters. For this, I am

blessed and thankful to be able to be on the water and fish almost any time I want. If you are able this year to have a Thanksgiving dinner with family and friends, go around the table and have everyone tell what they are thankful for.

Now let's talk fishing! The Grouper bite is getting better every day. With the stone crab traps out and the cooler waters, the grouper are moving into accessible and more shallow water. I like to anchor on my spots and bottom fish. My setup is 60-pound test with enough weight to keep the bait on the bottom and a 7/0 circle hook. The baits can be live pinfish, shrimp, cut baits or frozen baits like threadfins or sardines. Be ready to reel first then lift the rod. These fish fight hard and try to get to the nearest rock, so the first few seconds are most crucial to try to turn the fish before it "rocks" you. The regulations are gag grouper 24 inches and reds are 20 inches. Both are two per

person. Speaking of regulations, on a recent trip I was boarded by the FWC. They checked my fish and explained that on some species there are different size limits for State and Federal waters. For example, mangrove snapper are 10 inches in State waters and 12 inches in Federal waters. Cobia are 33 inches State waters and 36 inches Federal waters. Now State waters end at nine miles and Federal begins. So, if you fish past nine miles, keep this in mind. I have no problem being boarded by FWC. They are out there, not only for our safety, but to help keep our resource strong.

Other species I have been getting on my charters are Spanish mackerel, cobia, sharks, mangrove snapper and thank God for grunts. When fishing for the Spanish, I like to chum and use a jig with a plastic jerk bait. Work the bait fast and, if you get a bump, keep jiggling the lure and don't stop. They want a fast-moving bait. You will go through a lot of lures but, when you do hook up, it's a really fun fight!

From the Fishdaddy family, I wish everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving.

I'm always looking for reports and pictures. You can email me or stop by my website and become a "FISHHEAD." Get out there on the water and make some memories with friends and family!

*Capt. Joel Gant operates Fishdaddy Charters out of Hernando Beach. Coast guard licensed, insured and Federal permitted. He knows the local waters like the back of his hand, and works both inshore and offshore trips. Check him out on facebook or you can reach him at (352) 279-1615. Visit his website, [www.fishdaddycharter.com](http://www.fishdaddycharter.com)*



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Date	High				Low				☀		☾
	AM	ft	PM	ft	AM	ft	PM	ft	Rise	Set	Moon
1 Sun	1:00	2.5	3:09	1.8	8:22	0.0	7:30	1.3	6:40	5:47	☉
2 Mon	1:20	2.6	3:50	1.7	8:56	0.0	7:46	1.4	6:41	5:46	☉
3 Tue	1:46	2.6	4:37	1.6	9:34	-0.1	8:03	1.4	6:42	5:46	☉
4 Wed	2:16	2.6	5:38	1.6	10:18	0.0	8:21	1.5	6:42	5:45	☉
5 Thu	2:53	2.6			11:10	0.0			6:43	5:44	☉
6 Fri	3:37	2.5					12:11	0.0	6:44	5:44	☉
7 Sat	4:33	2.4					1:20	0.1	6:44	5:43	☉
8 Sun	5:50	2.2	10:16	1.7			2:27	0.1	6:45	5:42	☉
9 Mon	7:33	2.1	10:35	1.8	1:59	1.5	3:27	0.2	6:46	5:42	☉
10 Tue	9:15	2.0	10:55	1.9	3:34	1.2	4:18	0.3	6:47	5:41	☉
11 Wed	10:40	2.0	11:16	2.1	4:40	0.9	5:02	0.4	6:47	5:41	☉
12 Thu	11:52	2.0	11:39	2.2	5:35	0.5	5:40	0.7	6:48	5:40	☉
13 Fri			12:57	2.0	6:25	0.1	6:13	0.9	6:49	5:40	☉
14 Sat	12:03	2.4	2:00	1.9	7:14	-0.2	6:41	1.1	6:50	5:39	☉
15 Sun	12:31	2.6	3:02	1.8	8:02	-0.5	7:05	1.3	6:50	5:39	☉
16 Mon	1:02	2.8	4:08	1.6	8:52	-0.6	7:26	1.4	6:51	5:39	☉
17 Tue	1:36	2.8	5:23	1.5	9:43	-0.6	7:41	1.4	6:52	5:38	☉
18 Wed	2:15	2.8			10:37	-0.5			6:53	5:38	☉
19 Thu	2:58	2.6			11:35	-0.3			6:54	5:38	☉
20 Fri	3:48	2.4					12:36	-0.1	6:54	5:37	☉
21 Sat	4:53	2.1	9:52	1.6			1:37	0.0	6:55	5:37	☉
22 Sun	6:28	1.9	10:07	1.7	1:03	1.5	2:34	0.2	6:56	5:37	☉
23 Mon	8:25	1.7	10:26	1.8	3:06	1.2	3:24	0.3	6:57	5:37	☉
24 Tue	10:00	1.6	10:46	1.9	4:20	0.9	4:06	0.5	6:57	5:36	☉
25 Wed	11:13	1.6	11:04	2.0	5:11	0.6	4:43	0.7	6:58	5:36	☉
26 Thu	12:15P	1.6	11:22	2.1	5:54	0.3	5:15	0.8	6:59	5:36	☉
27 Fri	1:10P	1.6	11:39	2.2	6:31	0.1	5:41	1.0	7:00	5:36	☉
28 Sat	1:59P	1.5	11:57	2.3	7:06	-0.1	6:03	1.1	7:01	5:36	☉
29 Sun			2:45	1.5	7:40	-0.3	6:21	1.2	7:01	5:36	☉
30 Mon	12:19	2.4	3:29	1.4	8:13	-0.4	6:37	1.3	7:02	5:36	☉

# Old Port of Tampa



ezdocktampa.com

Date	High				Low				☀		☾
	AM	ft	PM	ft	AM	ft	PM	ft	Rise	Set	Moon
1 Sun	1:40	2.6	3:48	2.1	8:59	0.1	8:14	1.4	6:40	5:47	☉
2 Mon	1:59	2.7	4:32	2.0	9:30	0.0	8:39	1.5	6:41	5:46	☉
3 Tue	2:25	2.8	5:21	1.9	10:05	0.0	9:07	1.6	6:41	5:45	☉
4 Wed	2:58	2.9	6:15	1.9	10:44	0.0	9:41	1.6	6:42	5:44	☉
5 Thu	3:37	2.9	7:21	1.8	11:32	0.0	10:23	1.6	6:43	5:44	☉
6 Fri	4:23	2.8	8:37	1.8	12:31P	0.1	11:21	1.7	6:44	5:43	☉
7 Sat	5:19	2.6	9:46	1.8			1:41	0.1	6:44	5:43	☉
8 Sun	6:33	2.4	10:33	1.8	12:54	1.6	2:55	0.1	6:45	5:42	☉
9 Mon	8:09	2.2	11:08	1.9	2:44	1.5	4:02	0.1	6:46	5:41	☉
10 Tue	9:50	2.1	11:36	2.0	4:14	1.2	4:56	0.2	6:47	5:41	☉
11 Wed	11:15	2.1			5:21	0.8	5:40	0.3	6:47	5:40	☉
12 Thu	12:00	2.2	12:26	2.1	6:15	0.3	6:18	0.6	6:48	5:40	☉
13 Fri	12:22	2.3	1:32	2.1	7:04	0.0	6:51	0.8	6:49	5:39	☉
14 Sat	12:45	2.5	2:34	2.0	7:52	-0.3	7:20	1.1	6:50	5:39	☉
15 Sun	1:10	2.7	3:38	1.9	8:40	-0.5	7:49	1.3	6:50	5:38	☉
16 Mon	1:39	2.9	4:42	1.9	9:30	-0.5	8:17	1.5	6:51	5:38	☉
17 Tue	2:14	2.9	5:49	1.8	10:22	-0.5	8:49	1.6	6:52	5:38	☉
18 Wed	2:54	2.9	6:56	1.7	11:15	-0.4	9:28	1.6	6:53	5:37	☉
19 Thu	3:39	2.8	8:00	1.6	12:12P	-0.3	10:24	1.6	6:53	5:37	☉
20 Fri	4:31	2.6	8:55	1.6	1:10P	-0.1	11:48	1.5	6:54	5:37	☉
21 Sat	5:33	2.3	9:40	1.7			2:11	0.0	6:55	5:36	☉
22 Sun	6:56	1.9	10:17	1.7	1:38	1.4	3:08	0.1	6:56	5:36	☉
23 Mon	8:42	1.7	10:49	1.8	3:25	1.1	4:00	0.2	6:57	5:36	☉
24 Tue	10:21	1.6	11:17	1.9	4:45	0.7	4:44	0.4	6:57	5:36	☉
25 Wed	11:39	1.6	11:41	2.0	5:42	0.4	5:21	0.5	6:58	5:36	☉
26 Thu			12:42	1.6	6:28	0.1	5:53	0.7	6:59	5:36	☉
27 Fri	12:01	2.1	1:37	1.6	7:07	-0.2	6:20	0.9	7:00	5:35	☉
28 Sat	12:18	2.2	2:27	1.6	7:43	-0.3	6:44	1.1	7:00	5:35	☉
29 Sun	12:35	2.3	3:16	1.6	8:17	-0.4	7:08	1.2	7:01	5:35	☉
30 Mon	12:56	2.5	4:03	1.6	8:50	-0.5	7:33	1.3	7:02	5:35	☉



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# Tarpon Springs River



1500 US 19.  
Holiday, FL.

Date	High				Low				☀		☾
	AM	ft	PM	ft	AM	ft	PM	ft	Rise	Set	Moon
1 Sun	1:12	3.0	1:23	2.7	7:15	0.0	7:13	1.1	6:41	5:47	☉
2 Mon	12:36	3.0	1:58	2.7	7:47	-0.1	7:42	1.2	6:42	5:46	☉
3 Tue	1:01	3.1	2:35	2.6	8:19	-0.1	8:13	1.3	6:43	5:46	☉
4 Wed	1:30	3.1	3:14	2.5	8:53	-0.1	8:45	1.3	6:43	5:45	☉
5 Thu	2:03	3.1	3:57	2.4	9:31	-0.1	9:23	1.4	6:44	5:44	☉
6 Fri	2:42	3.0	4:45	2.3	10:15	0.0	10:09	1.5	6:45	5:44	☉
7 Sat	3:30	2.9	5:43	2.2	11:07	0.2	11:10	1.5	6:46	5:43	☉
8 Sun	4:32	2.7	6:54	2.2			12:13	0.3	6:46	5:42	☉
9 Mon	5:55	2.5	8:02	2.3	12:32	1.5	1:30	0.5	6:47	5:42	☉
10 Tue	7:36	2.5	8:56	2.5	1:59	1.3	2:41	0.5	6:48	5:41	☉
11 Wed	9:03	2.6	9:40	2.6	3:12	0.9	3:43	0.5	6:49	5:41	☉
12 Thu	10:15	2.8	10:20	2.8	4:14	0.4	4:37	0.6	6:49	5:40	☉
13 Fri	11:17	2.9	10:57	3.0	5:09	-0.1	5:25	0.7	6:50	5:40	☉
14 Sat	12:12P	2.9	11:34	3.2	5:59	-0.4	6:09	0.8	6:51	5:39	☉
15 Sun			1:03	2.9	6:46	-0.7	6:50	1.0	6:52	5:39	☉
16 Mon	12:10	3.3	1:53	2.8	7:31	-0.8	7:29	1.1	6:53	5:38	☉
17 Tue	12:48	3.3	2:43	2.6	8:17	-0.8	8:09	1.2	6:53	5:38	☉
18 Wed	1:27	3.3	3:31	2.4	9:02	-0.6	8:51	1.3	6:54	5:38	☉
19 Thu	2:09	3.1	4:18	2.3	9:48	-0.4	9:36	1.3	6:55	5:37	☉
20 Fri	2:56	2.9	5:05	2.2	10:35	-0.1	10:28	1.4	6:56	5:37	☉
21 Sat	3:50	2.6	5:58	2.1	11:25	0.3	11:31	1.4	6:56	5:37	☉
22 Sun	4:55	2.3	6:59	2.1			12:24	0.6	6:57	5:37	☉
23 Mon	6:23	2.1	7:58	2.2	12:53	1.3	1:32	0.8	6:58	5:36	☉
24 Tue	8:07	2.0	8:48	2.3	2:21	1.0	2:39	0.9	6:59	5:36	☉
25 Wed	9:28	2.1	9:29	2.4	3:31	0.7	3:34	1.0	7:00	5:36	☉
26 Thu	10:30	2.2	10:05	2.6	4:25	0.4	4:20	1.0	7:00	5:36	☉
27 Fri	11:19	2.3	10:37	2.7	5:10	-0.1	5:01	1.0	7:01	5:36	☉
28 Sat	12:01P	2.4	11:07	2.8	5:48	-0.2	5:38	1.1	7:02	5:36	☉
29 Sun	12:40P	2.4	11:35	2.8	6:23	-0.3	6:13	1.1	7:03	5:36	☉
30 Mon			1:16	2.4	6:57	-0.4	6:46	1.1	7:03	5:36	☉

# Hernando Beach, Rocky Creek, Little Pine Island



bluepelicanmarina.com

Date	High				Low				☀		☾
	AM	ft	PM	ft	AM	ft	PM	ft	Rise	Set	Moon
1 Sun	1:08	3.2	2:19	2.9	9:16	0.0	9:14	1.1	6:44	5:47	☉
2 Mon	1:32	3.3	2:54	2.9	9:48	-0.1	9:43	1.2	6:44	5:46	☉
3 Tue	1:57	3.3	3:31	2.8	10:20	-0.1	10:14	1.3	6:45	5:45	☉
4 Wed	2:26	3.3	4:10	2.7	10:54	-0.1	10:46	1.3	6:46	5:45	☉
5 Thu	2:59	3.3	4:53	2.6	11:32	-0.1	11:24	1.4	6:47	5:44	☉
6 Fri	3:38	3.2	5:41	2.5			12:16	0.0	6:47	5:43	☉
7 Sat	4:26	3.1	6:39	2.4	12:10	1.5	1:08	0.2	6:48	5:43	☉
8 Sun	5:28	2.9	7:50	2.4	1:11	1.5	2:14	0.3	6:49	5:42	☉
9 Mon	6:51	2.7	8:58	2.5	2:33	1.5	3:31	0.5	6:50	5:41	☉
10 Tue	8:32	2.7	9:52	2.6	4:00	1.3	4:42	0.5	6:51	5:41	☉
11 Wed	9:59	2.8	10:36	2.8	5:13	0.9	5:44	0.5	6:51	5:40	☉
12 Thu	11:11	3.0	11:16	3.1	6:15	0.4	6:38	0.6	6:52	5:40	☉
13 Fri	12:13P	3.1	11:53	3.3	7:10	-0.1	7:26	0.7	6:53	5:39	☉
14 Sat			1:08	3.2	8:00	-0.4	8:10	0.8	6:54	5:39	☉
15 Sun	12:30	3.4	1:59	3.1	8:47	-0.7	8:51	1.0	6:54	5:38	☉
16 Mon	1:06	3.5	2:49	3.0	9:32	-0.8	9:30	1.1	6:55	5:38	☉
17 Tue	1:44	3.6	3:39	2.8	10:18	-0.8	10:10	1.2	6:56	5:37	☉
18 Wed	2:23	3.5	4:27	2.6	11:03	-0.6	10:52	1.3	6:57	5:37	☉
19 Thu	3:05	3.4	5:14	2.5	11:49	-0.4	11:37	1.3	6:58	5:37	☉
20 Fri	3:52	3.1	6:01	2.3			12:36	-0.1	6:59	5:36	☉
21 Sat	4:46	2.8	6:54	2.3	12:29	1.4	1:26	0.3	6:59	5:36	☉
22 Sun	5:51	2.5	7:55	2.3	1:32	1.4	2:25	0.6	7:00	5:36	☉
23 Mon	7:19	2.3	8:54	2.3	2:54	1.3	3:33	0.8	7:01	5:36	☉
24 Tue	9:03	2.2	9:44	2.5	4:22	1.0	4:40	0.9	7:02	5:35	☉
25 Wed	10:24	2.3	10:25	2.6	5:32	0.7	5:35	1.0	7:03	5:35	☉
26 Thu	11:26	2.4	11:01	2.8	6:26	0.4	6:21	1.0	7:03	5:35	☉
27 Fri	12:15P	2.5	11:33	2.9	7:11	0.1	7:02	1.0	7:04	5:35	☉
28 Sat			12:57	2.6	7:49	-0.2	7:39	1.1	7:05	5:35	☉
29 Sun	12:03	3.0	1:36	2.6	8:24	-0.3	8:14	1.1	7:06	5:35	☉
30 Mon	12:31	3.1	2:12	2.6	8:58	-0.4	8:47	1.1	7:06	5:35	☉

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# CAPT. SERGIO'S CORNER:

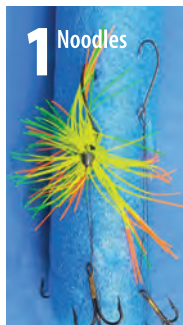
## OLD TIMER'S RIGS--SECRETS I LEARNED YEARS AGO

A good angler is like a magician who can pull tricks out of the bag to help him catch more fish. It could be just a simple item to save time or a technique that gets the fish to bite. We all have some tricks to help us catch more fish, and I am going to share some of them with you.

**These 6 basic tricks can help you catch more fish and save time and money.**

1. Noodles used for kids in the swimming pool, cut into different lengths, make excellent leader holders. They especially work well during the mackerel and king fish season allowing you to have 12 pre-rigged leaders ready to go. Use one color for mackerel and another color for kingfish. You make the leaders at home while watching TV during the commercials.
2. During the fall when the trout bite goes crazy, my favorite way of catching trout is using a Cajun Thunder float, only because it has two weighted beads that increase my cast during windy days and the beads create the sound of a wounded bait. The clarity of the water dictates the size of my leader anywhere from 15 to 30-pound fluorocarbon. I work the float with a popping action to draw attention to my bait and the float. Over the years, I noticed that my float had chunks missing from the trout attacking the float like a top water bait, so I put a small split ring where the swivel meets the float

- wire and added a 2/0 hook--I started catching two trout at a time. This method can be used with live bait or, as the picture shows, artificial bait.
3. One basic problem, over the years, was keeping the soft baits on the jig head after a few hits, so here is a simple problem solver. After the head of the bait starts to break, just cut it back a little and stick the tip of a toothpick through the bait and the eye of the hook. This keeps your artificial baits from sliding off.
4. When fishing winter tides in shallow grassy areas, you need to work just above the grass line. Take one of your top water plugs, remove the rear hook and put a short leader--the length will depend on the depth of water. I have mine set at about eight inches and I tie a mid-running fly. The action of the plug draws attention and the tailing fly becomes the easy prey for the fish to hit. In some cases, I have caught two fish at the same time.



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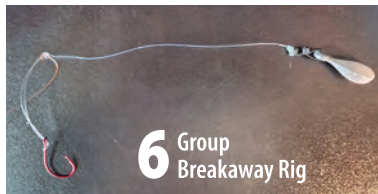
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BY: CAPT. SERGIO ATANES



5. Fall and winter fishing for sheepshead, mangrove snapper and flounder in deep water can be fun and very productive. I found a trick to get them to bite when all else fails--I fish this method all winter long. A simple soft glow bead is placed between the eye of the hook and the lead. For some reason, the glow of the bead seems to draw attention to the bait. My sheepshead, snapper and flounder bite has tripled over the last few years. The one question I ask myself, is it the bead that gets them to bite or has my luck increased? Either way it works for me.

6. Bottom fishing for grouper in the Bay, over the artificial reefs, produces some nice catches of grouper and other bottom fish. I was losing a lot of rigs just like everyone else who gambles fishing over structure. I found a way to reduce my losses and increase my catch. I use egg sinkers with swivels. Tie a loop knot at the bottom of the leader and use a small electrical tie from the loop knot to the eye of the sinker swivel. If my sinker gets stuck to the structure you can pull hard and break the electrical tie leaving your leader intact and only losing the sinker.



Capt. Sergio Atanes is host of Florida West Coast Fishing Report on Facebook and YouTube. He is also host to Aventuras De Pesca USA on national TV and Radio. | Email: atanes@msn.com | 813-973-7132 | reelfishing.com

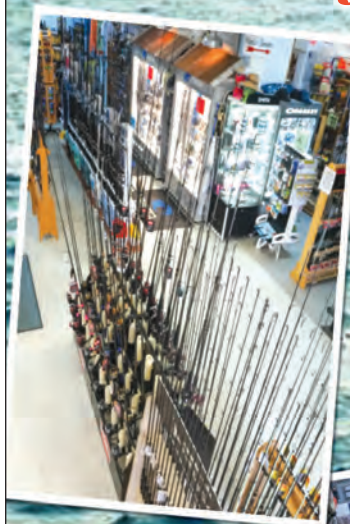


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will help build not only your technique, but your confidence when throwing plastics and hard baits

There are three major baits I like to use this time of year. The number one is The Slick Lure by Pure Flats. It's a weedless twitch bait that has a lazy presentation when worked through the water. The best part about it is, it's a bait for every water column on the flats. There isn't a depth too shallow or deep. Rig it on an Owner Beast 4/0 weightless or weighted hook and add your favorite bait scent to it. It's very hard for the big gator trout and redfish to turn down, as the winter negative tides approach and you're needing a long cast so the fish don't feel the pressure.

The number two bait of choice is a smaller topwater plug. Either a Skitter Walk or Top Pup. These baits can be deadly first thing in the morning on a

This is the time of year to try something new and learn--and that's throwing artificial baits! There is plenty of bait swimming around the area this time of year. This makes it a little less stressful for the angler wanting to learn how to throw artificial because our three major inshore species are eating everything in sight which

low tide worked across an open flat. Slower retrieves work best for the super skinny water. I use 20-pound fluorocarbon leader with my topwater plugs because, once you start getting into the 30-pound plus, it tends to make the bait nose heavy and not perform as it should.

The number three bait would be the mid-sized MirrOline. Use the natural green and black top colors when it comes to these baits--that way it mimics small white-bait and finger mullet. I use these baits when casting into deep holes where I know fish will be trapped. Let it sit for a couple of seconds before you start your retrieve. Big trout have a hard time turning these baits down in the winter time, and the snook will definitely chew it if it crosses their face

Armed Anglers in Holiday, Florida carries a wide selection of all these products mentioned above. They are open early in the morning and close late at night. Tight lines and good times everyone!



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# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

## NEPTONICS POKE RECIPE



Poke is an amazing, delicious and easy way to prepare your fresh caught fish! Here is our recipe. Ingredients can be found in your pantry and from your local grocery store. Serves 3-5 people.

### Ingredients:

2 cups sushi rice (follow your brands instructions)  
2 tablespoons of each black and white sesame seeds  
6 ounces light soy sauce  
4 ounces teriyaki sauce

6 ounces ponzu sauce  
3 ounces sesame oil  
1-pound snap peas or edamame  
Approximately 1.5 pounds of freshly speared fish

### Directions:

Combine all sauces into a medium mixing bowl and whisk together. Cut your filets into bite sized pieces and add to the mixing bowl. Put it in the refrigerator for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Cook the sushi rice according to its instructions. Let cool for about 15 to 20 minutes. Portion the rice into bowls. Remove the fish from the poke marinade and portion over the rice. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Add a few of the snap peas or edamame and enjoy! Pairs well with sake or a light beer.

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# SKINNY WATER REPORT

BY: DERICK BURGOS & NATALIE MANRIQUE



## KAYAKING AND COVID

**2020** has been one heck of a year! We have endured so many different restrictions and adopting new norms and ways of life that many of our lives have been turned upside down. In order to cope with these obstacles like work or lack thereof, unemployment, home schooling and just plain



cabin fever, many people have rediscovered the natural beauty and aquatic treasures that our State possesses.

There are over 900 Springs throughout Florida, not to mention our beautiful beaches and islands, thus making our incredible State an excellent place to go kayaking and unwind from the stress. It warms our heart to know that so many people are now getting into kayaking in the paddling sport, as well as, fishing. And, we have noticed a huge surge in interest in the sport, because it is a great way to social distance and also spend time with friends and family in a beautiful environment. Florida estuaries and fisheries are absolutely incredible and ever changing.

For people who are just beginning this sport, it is highly recommended by us that you get some sort of safety instruction and know what to do in case you are compromised or someone else is compromised. Always have a float plan, and make sure you choose the proper kayak and gear for the conditions where you want to paddle.



We hope this inspires you to get out and go kayaking, if you aren't already. Bring the family, bring the friends and bring the rods! Stay safe everyone. See you next month and don't forget, your adventure always begins with us!

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# SOUTH SHORE TAMPA BAY REPORT

BY: CAPT. CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR



November is known for its change in weather and trout. There are many estuaries to choose from in Tampa Bay that are holding good numbers of trout willing to eat anything in front of them. The trout being caught are averaging anywhere from 15 to 20 inches, and many fish 25 to 30 inches are being brought to the boat. With the Fall season having an epic start, I estimate the trout bite to carry itself into January.

Target areas for catching these fish are mangrove lines and grass flats adjacent to any

good span of mangroves or light structure--preferably fishing the mangrove lines during higher tides and the grass flats on lower tides. Finding moving water is key to locating fish. Still water will hold fish, however I find that many fish looking to eat are in areas of moving tides. When it comes to fishing for trout, you must maintain stealth in your approach and pay close attention to the activity presented to you on the water's surface. I make it a habit of noting any disturbance on top of the water. I wear a pair of polarized sunglasses to reduce the glare on the water and spot fish. Wearing polarized sunglasses can also help locate pot holes that may hold fish as well as "swash channels." These are small lines made into the bottom from current flow. Fish often use these swash channels as a pathway to venture on the length of a shallow flat.

Choice baits for trout this month are scaled sardines and live shrimp. I present these baits free-lined with a 2/0 to 3/0 hook on 25 to 30-pound fluorocarbon leader. For artificial baits, the Highwater Fishing Lures in a "Hot to Trot" color pattern has been working well on a 1/4 oz jig head. When determining where to soak your baits, anchor your boat up or drift in any of the areas mentioned before, depending on tide and where the most water is moving. Be patient, you may have to wait for the bite to start picking up. However, when it does, the wait is well worth the effort.

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# RIVERS TO BAY REPORT

BY: CAPT. JOHN RIVERS



The Halloween decorations are put away, the candy is mostly gone and the nonstop Black Friday ads are back. It's enough to make you want to turn off the tv and radio and go fishing. Tampa Bay, in November, is outstanding fishing and there is a wide variety of fish to be caught--from the flats to the deeper parts of the channel, along the Skyway and up into the rivers.

While the rest of the country is already dealing with lower temps, raking leaves and gearing up for ice and snow, here in Tampa Bay, we are fishing. Tampa Bay has year-round fishing and November is another outstanding month to fish the flats, rivers and deep channels of the Bay. The end of October brings the start of the cold fronts, but usually they aren't much to speak of. As November slides in, the cold fronts get stronger and the temps dip. The water temps drop to the middle and lower 70's, which triggers the fish to start feeding. As the bite fires off, we're targeting snook, redfish, jack crevalle, trout, sheepshead, cobia and more. Remember that snook, redfish and trout are closed until May 2020--it's catch and release until then.

One major bonus to fishing Tampa Bay in November is that when you find a few fish, there's a good chance that the fish will hang out there for a while. During

the warmer days of November, fish will be staged up on the flats. During the negative tides in November, look for snook and reds in pot holes and other depressions. If we get a cold front, look for fish on drop offs and near the mouth of the rivers and in the rivers. If it's cold for a few days, look for snook, reds and trout up in the rivers. But, when we get a few days of warmer weather in November, some of those fish will make their way back out onto the flats.

Bait is usually readily available in November; it's still on the flats unless we get a few major cold fronts, then it will be on the markers, bridges, and at the Skyway. If you don't want to toss the net for white bait, you can get live shrimp and toss artificials. Live shrimp works great in Tampa Bay in the winter because that's what the fish feed on naturally in the winter months. Winter is when I bring out the artificials for trout, snook and reds, and I usually do very well. Another bonus to November fishing is that you don't have to get out at the crack of dawn to get to the fish. When targeting snook, reds and trout in November, you can wait a bit and let the sun come up and warm up the flats while the fish stage up and get warm on the shallows near the mangroves.

There are plenty of shopping days left until Christmas, so make a little time to get out on the water and go fishing! I hope everyone has a happy Thanksgiving.



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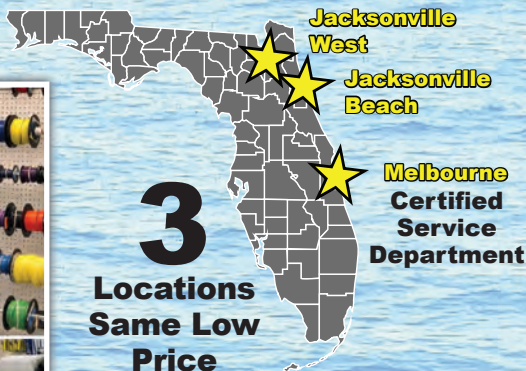
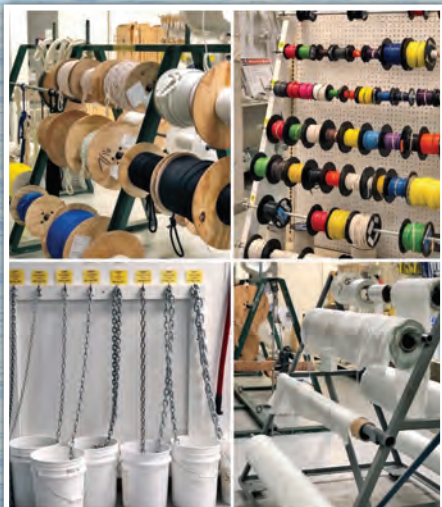
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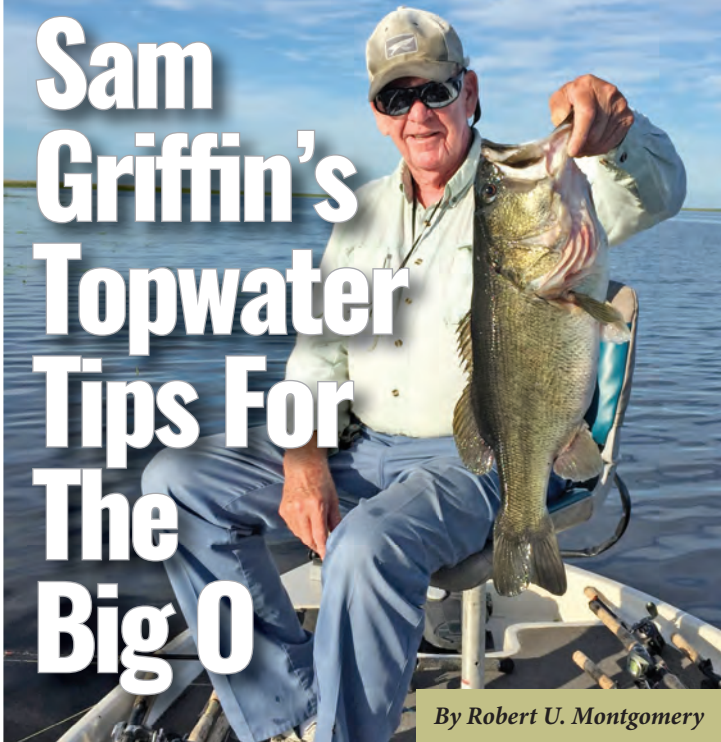
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# Sam Griffin's Topwater Tips For The Big O



By Robert U. Montgomery

Born on a houseboat in 1937, Sam Griffin started guiding on Florida's Lake Okeechobee when he was 12.

"Back then, the compression on those motors was too much for me to crank 'em, so the customer had to come back there and pull the rope," Griffin remembered. "I could run it all right. That lasted about a year, and then I got strong enough to do it myself."

Along with the 5-horsepower outboard, the youngster's guiding tools included a push pole, oars, canoe paddle and sculling paddle.

"The more I fished the marshes, the more I learned where the fish liked to stay," Sam said.

Sam and other guides dragged weighted saw blades behind their flat-bottom boats to cut trails they could use again and again.

"Once the trails were cut, the outboard motors could take it from there," he recalled. "The problem was that, back then, we didn't have weedless propellers and the weeds would get around them really bad if we didn't cut trails."

Of course, despite the guiding, young Sam still found time to fish.

And more than 70 years later, he's still chasing those bass. More often than not, he throws wooden topwater baits he's been making and field-testing for more than four decades.

Griffin arguably knows more about Lake Okeechobee, the bass fishery there, and topwater fishing in general than anyone else. He was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame in 2019.

Griffin's advice for topwater fishing includes:

- Topwaters aren't just for warm water. "You can catch bass consistently on top in water that is 50 degrees or above. Usually in colder water, you want to fish extremely fast or extremely slow, not in between."
- The same topwater bait will work anywhere. "It's a matter of confidence."
- With topwaters, most fish are caught on the front hook. That means it is important to have a bigger, stronger hook there.
- Dress up the back hook. Sam has learned that he gets 25 percent more bites when he puts pearlescent Mylar tinsel on the back hooks.
- Patience and fishing slowly will catch a lot more fish than fishing fast. "I tell people they have to learn to catch more fish rather than make more casts. Be superhumanly patient, and not just when fishing."
- If you want to get a bite, just look away for a second.
- For the last 10 feet to the boat, look at your bait. "Watch what's going on in the water when you lift it out. That will help tell you what the fish want."

For an in-depth look at the life of Sam Griffin and Lake Okeechobee, including solid how-to information from the man himself, check out Robert Montgomery's new book, "Big Sam and the Big O: Reflections and Revelations from a Lifetime of Bass Fishing and Luremaking on Lake Okeechobee," available from Amazon and other booksellers.

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# LIFE IS A BEACH SURF CASTING TIPS & TRICKS

By Richard L. Matteson

Surf casting is a great and inexpensive way to catch quality fish. From tarpon and snook to small panfish like whiting and croaker, you can catch dinner or experience the thrill of battling some of the world's top sportfish.

**The Rig:** A typical surf rig is an 8-foot medium rod with a spinning reel filled with braid. For tarpon, big snook, sharks and jacks, you need 200 to 300 yards of 40- to 60-pound braid with a 60- to 80-pound clear fluorocarbon leader. For big fish you need a heavier rod and 6000 or 8000 reel with a bigger spool for more line.

For smaller fish, I use 10- to 20-pound braid with a 30-pound leader on a light rod. I have two rods, one for tarpon and one for smaller fish. Take both and put the butt of the rod in the sand if you need to switch.

**Lures:** Tie on lures with a loop knot, which allows them to move freely. My favorite lures include: a 4-inch D.O.A. paddletail (pearl white or silver sparkle) rigged on a 3/8-ounce chartreuse jig head; a 1- or 2-ounce spoon (silver Crocodile or gold Johnson); topwater plugs (Skitterwalk, Zara Spook or various chug plugs); and shallow-running crankbaits. If it's windy or rough, add weight or use a heavier jig or spoon.

**Best Times to Fish:** First light and an hour before dark are the best times to fish. The best tides are early incoming and early outgoing. Try not to fish during slack tides. I also use moon phases, which regulate the amount of water rising and falling during each tide. King tides are the highest tides. Using and understanding tides is important.

**Finding Fish:** Fish will usually be wherever there's bait. The obvious tell is bird activity, pelicans and small terns nipping at baitfish. You can also spot baitfish. A little splash or dark spot shows a school. I walk the beach looking for bait and stop to fish when I see it. Birds aren't always there, and bait just pops up for a few seconds, so you need to be ready. Go to a beach access, get out and look for birds. If there are no birds, go to another beach access. It's amazing how much action you can have by finding the bait. In many cases, it's a matter of moving down the beach 100 yards.

**Techniques:** Identify the feeders. Bluefish, jacks, mackerel, ladyfish, kingfish and barracuda are all aggressive feeders that like flashy lures on a fast retrieve. They school and can be caught near the surface on any lure that moves. For tarpon, a slow steady retrieve is better. Snook will hit a slow retrieve and can also be caught jigging around the first cut. Whiting, pompano and croakers can all be caught twitching the lure off the bottom.

Richard Matteson is staff writer for the Stuart Rod and Reel Club.  
Contact him at (336) 414-3440.



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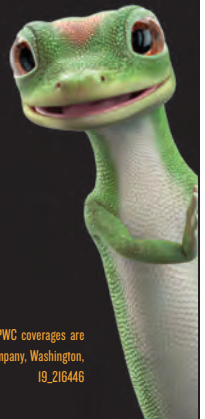
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According to an IGFA Facebook post, Smith was fishing in the Gulf of Mexico out of Destin, Fla. He hooked the grouper on a mingo snapper dropped down as bait. After a 20-minute fight, Smith saw color, and the largest grouper he had ever caught appeared at the surface.

The record grouper was weighed at Marina Point Destin and secured Smith his first and only IGFA world record.

It is a record that will likely remain for a few more years. The second largest gag grouper on IGFA's lists weighed 74 pounds, 12 ounces. It was also caught in the Gulf out of Destin. In 2002, David McGriff's huge gag broke the men's 130-pound class world record with a mark that still stands today.

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# Marine Flea Market and Seafood Fest Sails into West Palm Nov. 14-15!

On Nov. 14 and 15, the 12th Annual Palm Beach Marine Flea Market, Boat Sale and Seafood Festival will be held at The South Florida Fairgrounds at 9067 Southern Blvd, West Palm Beach. The festival starts at 9 a.m. and lasts until 5 p.m. both days.

In today's economy, boat owners, nautical vendors and marine artists and craftsmen are all seeking new ways to sell their new, used and clearance items to customers looking for bargains. The Palm Beach festival offers two fun-filled days with great opportunities for buyers and sellers to get together and find great deals on all kinds of marine gear and everything and anything having to do with fun on the water.

Catering to all levels of enthusiasts, from anglers to pleasure boaters and lovers of nautical décor, the show provides two days to hunt for the right accessories, equipment and supplies. Anyone who has a boat, wants a boat or needs something for their boating adventures will find it here and at a great price! Delicious seafood will add a nautical flavor to your shopping experience.

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surfers, kneeboards, boat covers, scissors, fenders, antique collectibles and maps, marine artifacts, lures and lines, boating apparel, taxidermy and diving equipment. All kinds of other marine items will be available to purchase.

Admissions is \$10, and Children 12 and under are free.

Visit the Florida Marine Flea Market, Boat Show and Seafood Festival website [www.FLNauticalFleaMarket.com](http://www.FLNauticalFleaMarket.com) for more information, discount tickets, vendor applications and specific driving directions. Contact Under the Sun Promotions Inc. at (954) 205-7813.

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## REEL, REMOVE, RELEASE



Photos by Carol Cassels

Juvenile Pelicans have a lot to learn in their first year of life. Somewhere around 9-12 weeks, juveniles leave their nest with their first flight. Although adults continue to feed young for some time after they leave the colony, they start learning how to catch fish and hunt on their own. Because of their inexperience, they are likely to fly into fishing line and get hooked or take a hooked bait. Unfortunately, studies show only 30% of all young pelicans will survive their first year and only 2% will live to reach the age of ten years.

Fishing line entanglement is the number one cause of death of Brown Pelicans, but it also kills Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, White Ibis, Little Blue Herons, Double-crested Cormorants and many more. As a fisherman, you will likely come across a tangled bird or accidentally hook one.

**Here's what you can do to prevent a torturous death for a pelican that returns to its roost at night, entangled in fishing line.**

1. Reel the bird in as you would a trophy fish and lift the pelican with the use of a net or simply grab its beak (they only weigh 4-6 pounds)
2. Put a towel or shirt over its head to keep it calm. Hold the beak, keeping the beak slightly open so it can breathe.
3. Push the hook through its skin until you can see the barb. Cut off the barb and then back the hook out. Be sure to remove all the line and then release the bird.

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# It's Sailfish Season!

PHOTO COURTESY OF WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

Sailfish are a target year-round off the Atlantic Coast of Florida, but the best action should kick off this month and improve progressively with each passing cold front as more migratory fish arrive to spend winter off the coast of central and south Florida.

November is the traditional start to the season, when sailfish from the north follow migrating baitfish into Florida waters to join the resident population. By December and January, it is estimated that more than a million sailfish arrive to overwinter, and that's when top sailfish boats report dozens of releases in a single day.

It sparks a mini tourism boom when anglers—rather than beachgoers—descend upon central and south Florida. Charter boats book up in a hurry this time of year. If you haven't already planned your trip, it might be too late.

Booking a jam-up sailfish trip is made more difficult by the specialized conditions it takes to bring out the best action. Everyone is looking for tailing conditions after the passage of a cold front. Sailfish move high in the water column and feed aggressively when a north wind clashes with the prevailing current to kick up swells in the Gulf Stream. Some say that the rougher the conditions are, the better the fishing is.

It's a good time of year to have a big boat, but even smaller vessels can get in on the action where the Gulf Stream swings closest to shore. Carefully watching the weather and timing a trip to get out as soon as conditions begin to subside strikes that fine balance between safety and catching sailfish.

Tactics differ depending on conditions and location. Some troll a spread of teasers and dead ballyhoo. Slow-trolled or drifted live baits can also be remarkably productive in some situations. The preferred method for many is kite fishing with live baits, because it is effective and exciting.

A kite is deployed trailing live baits, typically bridled goggle-eyes, threadfin herring or other hearty baitfish. The kite keeps baits near the surface, and most of the leaders and tackle are suspended above the water.

On approach, anglers might see the fin or bill circle the bait. On the take, everything goes into overdrive with the legendary speed and aerobatics of a hooked sailfish.

This time of year, it is a scene that takes place multiple times a day, and sometimes with multiple fish at the same time. Rough weather is a good time to be on the water when the sailfish descend on the Florida coast.



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# It's Tuna Time In Tuna Town

By Capt. Quinlyn Haddon

Venice Marina is the jumping-off point to some of the best fishing in the world. Known as "Tuna Town," this southern Louisiana meeting place of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico features endless branches of bayou waterways that give way to a Gulf peppered with oil rigs and other world-famous offshore structure.

It is an incredible ecosystem for fish to thrive in. There are also very few marinas with easy access to this fishery, which means a phenomenal array of fish species are plentiful, oversized and underfished. It is truly like going back in time.

This time of year, Tuna Town is aptly nicknamed. Autumn is shrimp-boat season in Venice, and it is arguably one of the best times to fish for tuna.

In the summer, you might run many miles offshore in search of yellowfin tuna, bouncing from rig to rig or finding prime schools breaching under frigate birds in open water. With a 24-mile run down the Mississippi River just to reach Gulf waters, the summertime gas-bill can definitely take a bite out of your wallet.

In fall, when these yellow-sickled beasts school behind shrimp boats, you will find yourself in a "Nat Geo" type situation within 300 feet of water, which out of Venice is only a few miles from the shore.

At the shrimp boats, you must convince the shrimpers to give you bycatch. Trade is king in this situation, but not all the crews are after the same thing. Bringing a case of cheap beer is standard practice, but sometimes they request something different like soda, energy drinks or even hooks and monofilament.

Sometimes, you will get lucky and the shrimpers will toss bags of stinky gold onto your boat. But more times than not, your mate will have to board them.

The captain will pull up right behind their

vessel, and the deckhand has to leap from the bow and grab the tires that hang off the back of the shrimp boat and scurry aboard to avoid being pinned between the boats. Once the deckhand has filled a few sacks of bycatch, they make the leap back onto your boat. I have personally done this many times, and all I have to say is, please don't forget to tip your mates!

The idea is to pull up next to a shrimp boat and chum so hard that you pull up a school of fish as you drift back. As you continuously throw chum in the water, you will see yellowfin tuna rolling out from underneath your boat to devour each piece. Your lines will be out of the water as you hand-feed the tuna and take inventory of fish collected under the boat. When you see the one you want cycle through the feeding pattern, that's when you toss out bait with a hook in it.

It sounds easy enough, but tuna aren't the only fish that school behind shrimp boats. Buckle-up, because you'll have to land that fish in the midst of a sharknado.

The sharks can be so thick, that as the crew we've had to ask clients if they wanted to fight fish or eat fish and had to land a few tuna for them. This type of fishing is incredible to witness for anyone, but is truly better suited to a more seasoned anglers.

Shrimp-boat season is completely worth the trip to Venice, but the weather can get a little nasty in the fall. You are likely to encounter a few days in a row that are unfishable offshore this time of year, so allow yourself a few extra days of availability. You can always check out the equally epic inshore fishery if you have to wait it out.

*Capt. Quinlyn Haddon now fishes out of St. Petersburg, Fla. with Reel Lucky Fishing Charters. Their charters are available for offshore, nearshore, inshore and customizable from anything in between. Call or text the owner, Capt. Joseph Dephillips, at (727) 557-7829.*



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A native of Tangier Island, Va., J.O. Strigle brought the seafood spice blend he created in his kitchen on the island to Maryland.

Jane McPhaul, J.O.'s daughter took over operations of the family business in the late eighties while her son, Don Ports, was serving in the Marine Corps. In 1990 Don joined his mother in the family business with a vision to expand.

In the summer of 1991 Don met his spice girl, Ginger, with the pick up line, "you're destined to be mine; you're named for a spice," said J.O. Spice Company president Don Ports to wife Ginger Ports the moment they met.

Twenty eight years later, Don and Ginger- alongside their children Brittany, Tyler and Bethany, are continuing the family traditions of quality seasonings, spices, and more at reasonable prices at their Halethorpe based J.O. Spice Company.

"We can provide crab houses everything they need for the crab eating experience, minus the crabs", Don says.

The company added crab boxes, crab paper, bushel baskets, crab knives, crab mallets and a variety of other items to their offerings.

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"My children, the fourth generation, and our amazing team work side-by-side to make all of this happen," Ginger says. "At J.O., we are all family who enjoy working with so many other family businesses. We are blessed."

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# Idaho Producing Monster Yellowstone Cutthroats

Yellowstone cutthroat trout longer than 30 inches are exceedingly rare, but that hasn't stopped Idaho anglers from besting that mark twice in the last few months.

On Sept. 8, Nate Burr, a fly fishing guide from Rexburg, Idaho, caught a 31-inch Yellowstone cutthroat that beat the 30.5-inch state length record set in August. Both fish came from the Snake River.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game reported that Burr and a buddy had been fly fishing the Snake River for three days, looking for big trout without much success. As evening set in on the third day of slow fishing, their luck changed as a huge trout smashed Burr's fly.

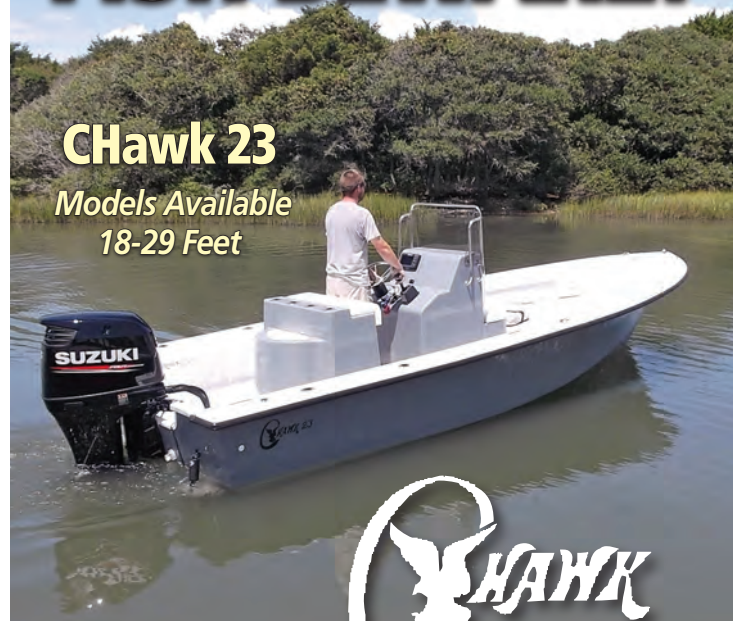
"It was one of those brutally slow days," Burr said. "Hunting big trout on streamers means a day on the water can go from zero to 100 in a split second. That was exactly the case with this fish."

After chasing the hooked trout for nearly half a mile downstream in a driftboat, the pair managed to finally scoop the fish with a landing net. After taking a quick photo and reviving the fish, Burr released the huge trout back into the Snake River, securing his name in the record books.

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Bass anglers looking for a destination fishery worth travelling to would be hard-pressed to find a better one than California's Clear Lake.

With all the historic bass fishing powerhouses in the South and the rise of awesome Northern smallmouth fisheries like the St. Lawrence River, it's worth asking why anyone would travel to the West Coast to go bass fishing. The answer is simple: Clear Lake is home to an abundance of large bass, and its location in California's gorgeous wine country makes it worth a visit even if the fishing wasn't so great.

And the fishing is great. According to California studies, Clear Lake has more fish per acre than any other lake in the country. Couple that with tournament data from B.A.S.S., and the fishery looks even more attractive. Tournament statistics show the average Clear Lake fish weighed 5 pounds in competition sacks last year. With high catch rates and average fish that weigh 5 pounds, competent anglers can expect to target lots of large fish. A 16-plus-pounder was the highlight of 2019. The lake record is 17 ½ pounds.

Clear Lake is a 43,000-acre natural lake about two hours north of Sacramento. Stockings of Florida strain largemouth along with northern largemouth has created a fishery renowned for quality and quantity. About 100 miles of shoreline are littered with docks, piers, pilings and other man-made structure. Humps, boulders, brush piles and an abundance of aquatic vegetation provide plenty of natural cover and structure.



For information, go to [www.californiasgreatestlakes.com](http://www.californiasgreatestlakes.com).

# GULF SNAPPER

## Three Times More Abundant Than Previously Thought

You can bet there are a bunch of Gulf charter captains out there right now bellowing an emphatic, "I told you so!"

In early October, preliminary findings of the Great Red Snapper Count were presented to Congress with results that indicate up to three times as many red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico than was previously thought.

This unprecedented study was led by the Harte Research Institute and provides an independent and robust assessment of Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock abundance. It shines an additional spotlight on how inadequate data was used to all but shut down one of the most popular recreational fisheries in the world.

The state-of-the-art study was funded through a \$10 million Congressional appropriation, championed by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) in 2016 and awarded by Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant. The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) was an early proponent of this study.

Over a two-year period, 21 scientists used a comprehensive suite of methods on high relief areas, like natural and artificial structures, and low relief areas, such as sand or mud bottom, to arrive at the absolute abundance estimate. Approximately two-thirds of the Gulf red snapper population was found to inhabit these low relief areas, which have not been historically sampled.

"The Great Red Snapper Count results validate what the recreational fishing community has long said – that there are a lot more red snapper in the Gulf than have been reflected in recent stock assessments," said Kellie Ralston, ASA's Southeast Fisheries Policy director. "We are grateful for the excellent scientific work by the Harte Research Institute and its partners, as well as Senator Shelby for recognizing the need to fund such a ground-breaking study."

With an interim analysis of stock abundance expected for the Gulf in early 2021, NOAA has indicated it will incorporate the Great Red Snapper Count's findings into its interim stock assessment. Hopefully that will lead to off-the-charts snapper fishing next summer!

A person in white clothing is holding a large, white, conical cast net that is overflowing with a large catch of fish, likely snappers, on a boat. The background shows a body of water and a line of trees under a clear blue sky.

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# DESTINATIONS FOR WINTER TROUT

By Nick Carter

For trout anglers, the next few months offer some of the best catch-and-release fishing of the year. Delayed harvest (DH) waters are regulated by the states to carry us through to spring with heavy stockings and catch-and-release, artificial-only fishing geared toward fly fishers.

Here's a look at a couple good DH options.

## CHAUGA RIVER, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Chauga River is one of several good backcountry streams in Upstate South Carolina. It features some 20 miles of remote, lightly pressured water known for brown trout. This time of year, the Chauga's 3-mile-long DH stretch is where it's at.

Karl Eckberg with a delayed harvest trout from South Carolina's Chauga River.

About an hour and a half west of Greenville, the Chauga flows a ridge east of the well-known Chattooga River. That's part of what makes the Chauga such a great option during South Carolina's Nov. 1-May 14 DH season. The Chattooga draws most of the fishing pressure, allowing the Chauga to fly under the radar.

The Chauga fishes just like the Chattooga, only a little smaller, said Karl Eckberg of Chattooga River Fly Shop. The river's ledges, drop-offs, deep river-bend holes and an abundance of riffle water hold rainbows, browns and brookies. There are only two access points to the DH stretch. Despite a good trail, Ekberg said the middle portion of the specially regulated water hardly gets touched.

Early in the season, freshly stocked trout are suckers for the "big flashy and rubbery stuff," said Ekberg. Load your box with Mop Flies, Y2Ks, Squirmy Worms and Gummy Worms. Micro streamers become more important as the season progresses, but fall and winter also offer hatches of midges, blue-winged olives and little black stoneflies.

## NANTAHALA RIVER, NORTH CAROLINA

The upper Nantahala River's 4-mile DH section is like a high-elevation trout stream without the hike.

About 20 minutes southeast of Bryson City, Wayah Road hugs the upper Nantahala, giving no-hassle access to miles of riffles and pocket water, big bridge holes, gorges and deep plunge pools.

The drawback to this situation is fishing pressure. Roadside pullouts fill up when the weather is nice during the October into June DH season. Stocked trout learn to spot a fake pretty quickly, so the fishing can be challenging.

There are good numbers of standard hatchery-sized rainbows, browns and brook trout. Big fish are known to stake claim to the best holding water.

For a few days after a stocking, the usual flashy "junk food" flies are effective, but Nantahala fish switch to more natural behaviors in a hurry. Fall and winter bring out winter stoneflies, blue-winged olives, midges and maybe even a few small caddis. Spring ushers in a riot of bug life and excellent dry fly fishing.

*Nick Carter is the author of "Flyfisher's Guide to North Carolina & Georgia." It is available on Amazon.com, and autographed copies are available by emailing the author at nsc8957@gmail.com.*





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